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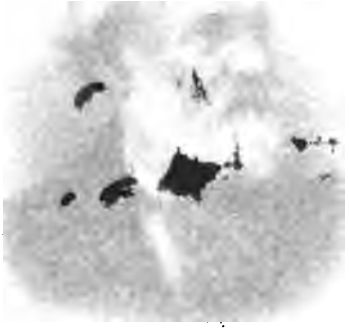

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To

T. TAYLOR, ESQ.

*My Friend and Coadjutor in the Comedy of "*MASKS AND FACES,*" to whom the Reader owes much of the best Matter in this Tale.*

And to the Memory of

MARGARET WOFFINGTON,

*Falsely "Summed up" until To-day, this "*DRAMATIC STORY*" is Inscribed by*

CHARLES READE

LONDON, *December 15, 1852*

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CHAPTER I

About the middle of the last century, at eight o'clock in the evening, in a large but poor apartment, a man was slumbering on a rough couch. His rusty and worn suit of black was of a piece with his uncarpeted room, the deal table of home manufacture, and its slim unsnuffed candle.

The man was Triplet, scene painter, actor, and writer of sanguinary plays, in which what ought to be, viz.: truth, plot, situation, and dialogue, were not; and what ought not to be, were: *scilicet*, small talk, big talk, fops, ruffians, and ghosts.

His three mediocrities fell so short of one talent, that he was sometimes *impransus*.

He slumbered, but uneasily, the dramatic author was uppermost, and his "Demon of the Hayloft" hung upon the thread of popular favour.

On his uneasy slumber entered from the theatre, Mrs. Triplet.

She was a lady who in one respect fell behind her husband, she lacked his variety in ill-doing, but she recovered herself by doing her one thing a shade worse than he did any of his three. She was, what is called in grim sport, an actress; she had just cast her mite of discredit on royalty by playing the Queen, and had trundled home the moment the breath was out of her royal body. She came in rotatory with fatigue, and fell, gristle, into a chair; she wrenched from her brow a diadem, and eyed it with contempt; took from her pocket a sausage, and contemplated it with respect and affection, placed it in a frying-pan on the fire, and entered her bedroom, meaning to don a loose wrapper, and dethrone herself into comfort.

But the poor woman was shot walking by Morpheus, and

subsided altogether; for dramatic performances, amusing and exciting to youth seated in the pit, convey a certain weariness to those bright beings who sparkle on the stage for bread and cheese.

Royalty disposed of, still left its trail of events. The sausage began to "spit." The sound was hardly out of its body, when poor Triplet writhed like a worm on a hook. "Spitter, spittest," went the sausage. Triplet groaned, and at last his inarticulate murmurs became words: "That's right, pit, now that is so reasonable to condemn a poor fellow's play before you have heard it out." Then, with a change of tone, "Tom," muttered he, "they are losing their respect for spectres; if they do, hunger will make a ghost of me." Next, he fancied the clown or somebody had got into his ghost's costume.

"Dear," said the poor dreamer, "the clown makes a very pretty spectre, with his ghastly white face, and his blood boltered cheeks and nose. I never saw the fun of a clown before, no! no! no! it is not the clown, it is worse, much worse; oh dear, ugh!" and Triplet rolled off the couch like Richard the Third. He sat a moment on the floor, with a finger in each eye; and then finding he was neither daubing, ranting, nor deluging earth with "acts," he accused himself of indolence, and sat down to write a small tale of blood and bombast. He took his seat at the deal table with some alacrity, for he had recently made a discovery.

How to write well, *rien que cela.*

"First think in as homely a way as you can; next shove your pen under the thought, and lift it by polysyllables to the true level of fiction:" (when done, find a publisher—if you can.) "This," said Triplet, "insures common sense to your ideas, which does pretty well for a basis," said Triplet apologetically, "and elegance to the dress they wear." Triplet then casting his eyes round, in search of such actual circumstances as could be incorporated on this plan with fiction, began to work thus:

TRIPLET'S FACTS.	TRIPLET'S FICTION.
A farthing dip is on the table. It wants snuffing.	A solitary candle cast its pale gleams around. Its elongated wick betrayed an owner steeped in oblivion.
He jumped up, and snuffed it with his fingers. Burned his fingers, and swore a little.	He rose languidly, and trimmed it with an instrument that he had by his side for that purpose, and muttered a silent ejaculation.

Before, however, the mole Triplet could undermine literature and level it with the dust, various interruptions and divisions broke in upon his design, and *sic nos servavit* Apollo. As he wrote the last sentence, a loud rap came to his door. A servant in livery brought him a note from Mr. Vane, dated Covent Garden. Triplet's eyes sparkled, he bustled, wormed himself into a less rusty coat, and started off to the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

In those days, the artists of the pen and the brush ferreted patrons, instead of aiming to be indispensable to the public, the only patron worth a single gesture of the quill.

Mr. Vane had conversed with Triplet, that is, let Triplet talk to him in a coffee-house, and Triplet, the most sanguine of unfortunate men, had already built a series of expectations upon that interview when this note arrived. Leaving him on his road from Lambeth to Covent Garden, we must introduce more important personages.

Mr. Vane was a wealthy gentleman from Shropshire, whom business had called to London four months ago, and now pleasure detained. Business still occupied the letters he sent now and then to his native country; but it had ceased to occupy the writer. He was a man of learning and taste, as times went; and his love of the Arts had taken him some time before our tale to the theatres, then the resort of all who pretended to taste; and it was thus he had become fascinated by Mrs. Woffington, a lady of great beauty, and a comedian high in favour with the town.

The first night he saw her was an epoch in the history of this gentleman's mind. He had learning and refinement, and he had not great practical experience, and such men are most open to impression from the stage. He saw a being, all grace and bright nature, move like a goddess among the stiff puppets of the scene; her glee and her pathos were equally catching, she held a golden key at which all the doors of the heart flew open. Her face, too, was as full of goodness as intelligence—it was like no other face; the heart bounded to meet it.

He rented a box at her theatre. He was there every night before the curtain drew up; and I am sorry to say, he at last took half a dislike to Sunday—Sunday "which knits up the ravelled slave of care," Sunday "tired nature's sweet restorer," because, on Sunday, there was no Peg Woffington. At first, he regarded her as a being of another sphere, an incarnation of poetry and art; but by degrees

his secret aspirations became bolder. She was a woman; there were men who knew her; some of them inferior to him in position, and, he flattered himself, in mind. He had even heard a tale against her character. To him her face was its confutation, and he knew how loose-tongued is calumny; but still—!

At last, one day he sent her a letter, unsigned. This letter expressed his admiration of her talent in warm but respectful terms; the writer told her it had become necessary to his heart to return her in some way his thanks for the land of enchantment to which she had introduced him. Soon after this, choice flowers found their way to her dressing-room every night, and now and then verses and precious stones mingled with her roses and eglantine. And, oh! how he watched the great actress's eye all the night; how he tried to discover whether she looked oftener towards his box than the corresponding box on the other side of the house.

Did she notice him, or did she not? What a point gained, if she was conscious of his nightly attendance: she would feel he was a friend, not a mere auditor. He was jealous of the pit, on whom Mrs. Woffington lavished her smiles without measure.

At last, one day he sent her a wreath of flowers, and implored her, if any word he had said to her had pleased or interested her, to wear this wreath that night. After he had done this he trembled; he had courted a decision, when, perhaps, his safety lay in patience and time. She made her *entrée*, he turned cold as she glided into sight from the prompter's side, he raised his eyes slowly and fearfully from her feet to her head; her head was bare, wreathed only by its own rich glossy honours. "Fool!" thought he, "to think she would hang frivolities upon that glorious head for me." Yet, his disappointment told him he had really hoped it; he would not have sat out the play, but for a leaden incapacity of motion that seized him.

The curtain drew up for the fifth act, and—could he believe his eyes?—Mrs. Woffington stood upon the stage with his wreath upon her graceful head. She took away his breath. She spoke the epilogue, and as the curtain fell, she lifted her eyes, he thought, to his box, and made him a distinct, queen-like curtsey; his heart fluttered to his mouth, and he walked home on wings and tiptoe. In short—

Mrs. Woffington, as an actress, justified a portion of this enthusiasm; she was one of the truest artists of her day;

a fine lady in her hands was a lady, with the genteel affectation of a gentlewoman, not a harlot's affectation, which is simply and without exaggeration what the stage commonly gives us for a fine lady; an old woman in her hands was a thorough woman, thoroughly old, not a cackling young person of epicene gender. She played Sir Harry Wildair like a man, which is how he ought to be played (or, which is better still, not at all), so that Garrick acknowledged her as a male rival, and abandoned the part he no longer monopolised.

Now it very, very rarely happens that a woman of her age is high enough in art and knowledge to do these things. In players, vanity cripples art at every step. The young actress who is not a Woffington aims to display herself by means of her part, which is vanity; not to raise her part by sinking herself in it, which is art. It has been my misfortune to see ——, and ——, and ——, and ——, et ceteras, play the man; nature forgive them, if you can, for art never will; they never reached any idea more manly than a steady resolve to exhibit the points of a woman with greater ferocity than they could in a gown. But consider, ladies, a man is not the meanest of the brute creation, so how can he be an unwomanly female? This sort of actress aims not to give her author's creation to the public, but to trot out the person instead of the creation, and shows sots what a calf it has—and is.

Vanity, vanity! all is vanity! Mesdames les Charlatanes.

Margaret Woffington was of another mould; she played the ladies of high comedy with grace, distinction, and delicacy. But in Sir Harry Wildair she parted with a woman's mincing foot and tongue, and played the man in a style large, spirited, and *élancé*. As Mrs. Day (committee), she painted wrinkles on her lovely face so honestly that she was taken for threescore, and she carried out the design with voice and person, and did a vulgar old woman to the life. She disfigured her own beauties to show the beauty of her art: in a word, she was an artist! It does not follow she was the greatest artist that ever breathed; far from it. Mr. Vane was carried to this notion by passion and ignorance.

On the evening of our tale he was at his post patiently sitting out one of those sanguinary discourses our rude forefathers thought were tragic plays. *Sedet æternumque Sedebit Infelix Theseus*, because Mrs. Woffington is to speak the epilogue.

These epilogues were curiosities of the human mind; they whom, just to ourselves and *them*, we call our *forbears*, had

an idea their blood and bombast were not ridiculous enough in themselves, so when the curtain had fallen on the *débris* of the *dramatis personæ*, and of common sense, they sent on an actress to turn all the sentiment so laboriously acquired into a jest.

To insist that nothing good or beautiful shall be carried safe from a play out into the street was the bigotry of English horse-play. Was a Lucretia the heroine of the tragedy she was careful in the epilogue to speak like Messalina. Did a king's mistress come to hunger and repentance, she disinfected all the *petites maîtresses* in the house of the moral, by assuring them that sin is a joke, repentance a greater, and that she individually was ready for either if they would but cry, laugh, and pay. Then the audience used to laugh, and if they did not, lo! the manager, actor, and author of heroic tragedy, were exceeding sorrowful.

Whilst sitting attendance on the epilogue, Mr. Vane had nothing to distract him from the congregation but a sanguinary sermon in five heads, so his eyes roved over the pews, and presently he became aware of a familiar face watching him closely. The gentleman to whom it belonged finding himself recognised left his seat, and a minute later Sir Charles Pomander entered Mr. Vane's box.

This Sir Charles Pomander was a gentleman of vice: pleasure he called it. Mr. Vane had made his acquaintance two years ago in Shropshire. Sir Charles, who husbanded everything except his soul, had turned himself out to grass for a month. His object was, by roast mutton, bread with some little flour in it, air, water, temperance, chastity, and peace, to be enabled to take a deeper plunge into impurities of food and morals.

A few nights ago, unseen by Mr. Vane, he had observed him in the theatre; an ordinary man would have gone at once and shaken hands with him, but this was not an ordinary man, this was a diplomatist. First of all, he said to himself, "What is this man doing here?" Then he soon discovered this man must be in love with some actress; then it became his business to know who she was; this too soon betrayed itself. Then it became more than ever Sir Charles's business to know whether Mrs. Woffington returned the sentiment, and here his penetration was at fault for the moment; he determined, however, to discover.

Mr. Vane then received his friend all unsuspicious how that friend had been skinning him with his eyes for some

time past. After the usual compliments had passed between two gentlemen who had been hand and glove for a month and forgotten each other's existence for two years, Sir Charles still keeping in view his design, said—

"Let us go upon the stage." The fourth act had just concluded.

"Go upon the stage!" said Mr. Vane; "what, where she —I mean among the actors?"

"Yes; come into the green-room. There are one or two people of reputation there, I will introduce you to them, if you please."

"Go upon the stage!" why if it had been proposed to him to go to heaven he would not have been more astonished. He was too astonished at first to realise the full beauty of the arrangement, by means of which he might be within a yard of Mrs. Woffington, might feel her dress rustle past him, might speak to her, might drink her voice fresh from her lips almost before it mingled with meaner air. Silence gives consent, and Mr. Vane, though he thought a great deal, said nothing; so Pomander rose, and they left the boxes together. He led the way to the stage door, which was opened obsequiously to him; they then passed through a dismal passage, and suddenly emerged upon that scene of enchantment, the stage; a dirty platform encumbered on all sides with piles of scenery in flats. They threaded their way through rusty velvet actors and fustian carpenters, and entered the green-room. At the door of this magic chamber Vane trembled and half wished he could retire. They entered; his apprehension gave way to disappointment; she was not there. Collecting himself, he was presently introduced to a smart, jaunty, and to do him justice, *distingué* old beau. This was Colley Cibber, Esq., poet laureate, and retired actor and dramatist, a gentleman who is entitled to a word or two.

This Cibber was the only actor since Shakespeare's time who had both acted and written well. Pope's personal resentment misleads the reader of English poetry as to Cibber's real place among the wits of the day.

The man's talent was dramatic, not didactic, or epic, or pastoral. Pope was not so deep in the drama as in other matters, and Cibber was one of its luminaries; he wrote some of the best comedies of his day. He also succeeded where Dryden, for lack of true dramatic taste, failed. He tampered successfully with Shakespeare. Colley Cibber's

version of "Richard the Third" is impudent and slightly larcenic, but it is marvellously effective. It has stood a century, and probably will stand for ever; and the most admired passages, in what literary humbugs who pretend they know Shakespeare by the closet, not the stage, accept as Shakespeare's "Richard," are Cibber's.

Mr. Cibber was now in private life, a mild edition of his own Lord Foppington; he had none of the snob-fop as represented on our conventional stage; nobody ever had, and lived. He was in tolerably good taste; but he went ever gold-laced, highly-powdered, scented, and diamonded, dispensing graceful bows, praises of whoever had the good luck to be dead, and satire of all who were here to enjoy it.

Mr. Vane, to whom the drama had now become the golden branch of letters, looked with some awe on this veteran, for he had seen many Woffingtons. He fell soon upon the subject nearest his heart. He asked Mr. Cibber what he thought of Mrs. Woffington. The old gentleman thought well of the young lady's talent, especially her comedy; in tragedy, said he, she imitates Mademoiselle Dumesnil, of the Théâtre Français, and confounds the stage rhetorician with the actress. The next question was not so fortunate. "Did you ever see so great and true an actress upon the whole?"

Mr. Cibber opened his eyes, a slight flush came into his wash-leather face, and he replied, "I have not only seen many equal, many superior to her, but I have seen some half-dozen who would have eaten her up and spit her out again, and not known they had done anything out of the way."

Here Pomander soothed the veteran's dudgeon by explaining in dulcet tones that his friend was not long from Shropshire, and—The critic interrupted him, and bade him not dilute the excuse.

Now, Mr. Vane had as much to say as either of them, but he had not the habit, which dramatic folks have, of carrying his whole bank in his cheek-pocket, so they quenched him for two minutes. But lovers are not silenced, he soon returned to the attack; he dwelt on the grace, the ease, the freshness, the intelligence, the universal beauty of Mrs. Woffington. Pomander sneered, to draw him out. Cibber smiled, with good-natured superiority. This nettled the young gentleman, he fired up, his handsome countenance glowed, he turned Demosthenes for her he loved. One

advantage he had over both Cibber and Pomander, a fair stock of classical learning; on this he now drew.

"Other actors and actresses," said he, "are monotonous in voice, monotonous in action, but Mrs. Woffington's delivery has the compass and variety of nature, and her movements are free from the stale uniformity that distinguishes artifice from art. The others seem to me to have but two dreams of grace, a sort of crawling on stilts is their motion, and an angular stiffness their repose." He then cited the most famous statues of antiquity, and quoted situations in plays where, by her fine dramatic instinct, Mrs. Woffington, he said, threw her person into postures similar to these, and of equal beauty; not that she strikes attitudes like the rest, but she melts from one beautiful statue into another; and if sculptors could gather from her immortal graces, painters too might take from her face the beauties that belong of right to passion and thought, and orators might revive their withered art, and learn from those golden lips the music of old Athens, that quelled tempestuous mobs, and princes drunk with victory.

Much as this was, he was going to say more, ever so much more, but he became conscious of a singular sort of grin upon every face; this grin made him turn rapidly round to look for its cause. It explained itself at once; at his very elbow was a lady, whom his heart recognised, though her back was turned to him. She was dressed in a rich silk gown, pearl white, with flowers and sprigs embroidered; her beautiful white neck and arms were bare. She was sweeping up the room with the epilogue in her hand, learning it off by heart; at the other end of the room she turned, and now she shone full upon him.

It certainly was a dazzling creature: she had a head of beautiful form, perched like a bird upon a throat massive yet shapely and smooth as a column of alabaster, a symmetrical brow, black eyes full of fire and tenderness, a delicious mouth, with a hundred varying expressions, and that marvellous faculty of giving beauty alike to love, or scorn, a sneer or a smile. But she had one feature more remarkable than all, her eyebrows—the actor's feature—they were jet black, strongly marked, and in repose were arched like a rainbow; but it was their extraordinary flexibility which made other faces upon the stage look sleepy beside Margaret Woffington's. In person she was considerably above the middle height, and so finely formed that one could not determine the exact

character of her figure. At one time it seemed all stateliness, at another time elegance personified, and flowing voluptuousness at another. She was Juno, Psyche, Hebe, by turns, and for aught we know at will.

It must be confessed that a sort of halo of personal grandeur surrounds a great actress. A scene is set; half-a-dozen nobodies are there lost in it, because they are and seem lumps of nothing. The great artist steps upon that scene, and how she fills it in a moment! Mind and majesty wait upon her in the air; her person is lost in the greatness of her personal presence; she dilates with *thought*, and a stupid giantess looks a dwarf beside her.

No wonder then that Mr. Vane felt overpowered by this torch in a closet. To vary the metaphor, it seemed to him, as she swept up and down, as if the green-room was a shell, and this glorious creature must burst it and be free. Meantime, the others saw a pretty actress studying her business; and Cibber saw a dramatic school-girl learning what he presumed to be a very silly set of words. Sir C. Pomander's eye had been on her the moment she entered, and he watched keenly the effect of Vane's eloquent eulogy; but apparently the actress was too deep in her epilogue for anything else. She came in saying "Mum, mum, mum," over her task, and she went on doing so. The experienced Mr. Cibber, who had divined Vane in an instant, drew him into a corner, and complimented him on his well-timed eulogy.

"You acted that mighty well, sir," said he. "Stop my vitals! if I did not think you were in earnest, till I saw the jade had slipped in among us. It told, sir—it told."

Up fired Vane. "What do you mean, sir?" said he. "Do you suppose my admiration of that lady is feigned?"

"No need to speak so loud, sir," replied the old gentleman; "she hears you. These hussies have ears like hawks."

He then dispensed a private wink and a public bow; with which he strolled away from Mr. Vane, and walked feebly and jauntily up the room, whistling "Fair Hebe;" fixing his eye upon the past, and somewhat ostentatiously overlooking the existence of the present company.

There is no great harm in an old gentleman whistling, but there are two ways of doing it; and as this old beau did it, it seemed not unlike a small cock-a-doodle-doo of general defiance; and the denizens of the green-room, swelled now to a considerable number by the addition of all the ladies

and gentlemen who had been killed in the fourth act, or whom the buttery-fingered author could not keep in hand until the fall of the curtain, felt it as such; and so they were not sorry when Mrs. Woffington, looking up from her epilogue, cast a glance upon the old beau, waited for him, and walked parallel with him on the other side the room, giving an absurdly exact imitation of his carriage and deportment. To make this more striking, she pulled out of her pocket, after a mock search, a huge paste ring, gazed on it with a ludicrous affectation of simple wonder, stuck it, like Cibber's diamond, on her little finger, and pursing up her mouth, proceeded to whistle a quick movement—

"Which by some devilish cantrip sleight,"

played round the old beau's slow movement, without being at variance with it. As for the character of this lady-like performance, it was clear, brilliant, and loud as blacksmith.

The folk laughed; Vane was shocked: "She profanes herself by whistling," thought he. Mr. Cibber was confounded. He appeared to have no idea whence came this sparkling adagio. He looked round, placed his hands to his ears, and left off whistling. So did his musical accomplice.

"Gentlemen," said Cibber, with pathetic gravity, "the wind howls most dismally this evening! I took it for a drunken shoemaker!"

At this there was a roar of laughter, except from Mr. Vane. Peg Woffington laughed as merrily as the others, and showed a set of teeth that were really dazzling; but all in one moment, without the preliminaries an ordinary countenance requires, this laughing Venus pulled a face gloomy beyond conception. Down came her black brows straight as a line, and she cast a look of bitter reproach on all present; resuming her study, as who should say, "Are ye not ashamed to divert a poor girl from her epilogue?" And then she went on, "Mum! mum! mum!" casting off ever and anon resentful glances; and this made the fools laugh again.

The Laureate was now respectfully addressed by one of his admirers, James Quin, the Falstaff of the day, and the rival at this time of Garrick in tragic characters, though the general opinion was, that he could not long maintain a stand against the younger genius and his rising school of art.

Off the stage, James Quin was a character; his eccentricities were three—a humorist, a glutton, and an honest man;

traits that often caused astonishment and ridicule, especially the last.

"May we not hope for something from Mr. Cibber's pen after so long a silence?"

"No," was the considerate reply. "Who have ye got to play it?"

"Plenty," said Quin; "there's your humble servant, there's——"

"Humility at the head of the list," cried she of the epilogue. "Mum! mum! mum!"

Vane thought this so sharp.

"Garrick, Barry, Macklin, Kitty Clive here at my side, Mrs. Cibber, the best tragic actress I ever saw; and Woffington, who is as good a comedian as you ever saw, sir," and Quin turned as red as fire.

"Keep your temper, Jemmy," said Mrs. Woffington, with a severe accent. "Mum! mum! mum!"

"You misunderstand my question," replied Cibber calmly; "I know your *dramatis personæ*, but where the devil are your actors?"

Here was a blow.

"The public," said Quin, in some agitation, "would snore, if we acted as they did in your time."

"How do you know that, sir?" was the supercilious rejoinder; "*you never tried!*"

Mr. Quin was silenced. Peg Woffington looked off her epilogue.

"Bad as we are," said she coolly, "we might be worse."

Mr. Cibber turned round, slightly raised his eyebrows:

"Indeed!" said he. "Madam!" added he, with a courteous smile; "will you be kind enough to explain to me, how you could be worse?"

"If, like a crab we could go backwards!"

At this the auditors tittered; and Mr. Cibber had recourse to his spy-glass.

This gentleman was satirical or insolent, as the case might demand, in three degrees, of which the snuff-box was the comparative, and the spy-glass the superlative. He had learned this on the stage; in annihilating Quin he had just used the snuff weapon, and now he drew his spy-glass upon poor Peggy.

"Whom have we here?" said he; then he looked with his spy-glass to see; "oh! the little Irish orange girl!"

"Whose basket outweighed Colley Cibber's salary for the

first twenty years of his dramatic career," was the delicate reply to the above delicate remark. It staggered him for a moment; however, he affected a most puzzled air, then gradually allowed a light to steal into his features.

"Eh! ah! oh! how stupid I am; I understand; you sold something besides oranges!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Vane, and coloured up to the temples, and cast a look on Cibber, as much as to say, "if you were not seventy-three!"

His ejaculation was something so different from any tone any other person there present could have uttered, that the actress's eye dwelt on him for a single moment, and in that moment he felt himself looked through and through.

"I sold the young fops a bargain, you mean," was her calm reply; "and now I am come down to the old ones. A truce, Mr. Cibber, what do you understand by an actor? Tell me; for I am foolish enough to respect your opinion on these matters!"

"An actor, young lady," said he gravely, "is an artist who has gone deep enough in his art, to make dunces, critics, and greenhorns take it for nature; moreover, he really personates; which your mere *man of the stage* never does. He has learned the true art of self-multiplication. He drops Betterton, Booth, Wilkes, or, ahem——"

"Cibber," inserted Sir Charles Pomander. Cibber bowed.

"In his dressing-room, and comes out young or old, a fop, a valet, a lover, or a hero, with voice, mien, and every gesture to match. A grain less than this may be good speaking, fine preaching, deep grunting, high ranting, eloquent reciting; but I'll be hanged if it is acting!"

"Then, Colley Cibber never acted," whispered Quin to Mrs. Clive.

"Then, Margaret Woffington is an actress," said M. W.; "the fine ladies take my Lady Betty for their sister. In Mrs. Day, I pass for a woman of seventy; and in Sir Harry Wildair I have been taken for a man. I would have told you that before, but I didn't know it was to my credit," said she slily, "till Mr. Cibber laid down the law."

"Proof!" said Cibber.

"A warm letter from one lady, diamond buckles from another, and an offer of her hand and fortune from a third; *rien que cela.*"

Mr. Cibber conveyed behind her back a look of absolute incredulity; she divined it.

"I will not show you the letters," continued she, "because Sir Harry, though a rake, was a gentleman; but here are the buckles," and she fished them out of her pocket, capacious of such things. The buckles were gravely inspected, they made more than one eye water, they were undeniable.

"Well, let us see what we can do for her," said the Laureate. He tapped his box, and without a moment's hesitation produced the most execrable distich in the language:

> "Now who is like Peggy, with talent at will,
> A maid loved her Harry, *for want of a Bill?*"

"Well, child," continued he, after the applause which follows extemporary verses had subsided, "take *me* in. Play something to make me lose sight of saucy Peg Woffington, and I'll give the world five acts more before the curtain falls on Colley Cibber."

"If you could be deceived," put in Mr. Vane, somewhat timidly; "I think there is no disguise through which grace and beauty such as Mrs. Woffington's would not shine, to my eyes."

"That is to praise my person at the expense of my wit, sir, is it not?" was her reply.

This was the first word she had ever addressed to him; the tones appeared so sweet to him, that he could not find anything to reply for listening to them; and Cibber resumed—

"Meantime, I will show you a real actress; she is coming here to-night to meet me. Did ever you children hear of Ann Bracegirdle?"

"Bracegirdle!" said Mrs. Clive; "why she has been dead this thirty years; at least I thought so."

"Dead to the stage. There is more heat in her ashes, than in your fire, Kate Clive! Ah! here comes her messenger," continued he, as an ancient man appeared with a letter in his hand. This letter Mrs. Woffington snatched and read, and at the same instant in bounced the call-boy. "Epilogue called," said this urchin, in the tone of command which these small fry of Parnassus adopt; and obedient to his high behest, Mrs. Woffington moved to the door with the Bracegirdle missive in her hand, but not before she had delivered its general contents: "The great actress will be here in a few minutes," said she, and she glided swiftly out of the room.

CHAPTER II

PEOPLE whose mind or manners possess any feature, and are not as devoid of all eccentricity as half-pounds of butter bought of metropolitan grocers, are recommended not to leave a roomful of their acquaintances until the last but one. Yes, they should always be penultimate. Perhaps Mrs. Woffington knew this; but epilogues are stubborn things, and call-boys undeniable.

"Did you ever hear a woman whistle before?"

"Never; but I saw one sit astride on an ass in Germany!"

"The saddle was not on her husband, I hope, madam?"

"No, sir; the husband walked by his kinsfolk's side, and made the best of a bad bargain, as Peggy's husband will have to."

"Wait till some one ventures on the gay Lotharia—*illi æs triplex;* that means he must have triple brass, Kitty."

"I deny that, sir; since his wife will always have enough for both."

"I have not observed the lady's brass," said Vane, trembling with passion; "but I observed her talent, and I noticed that whoever attacks her to her face, comes badly off."

"Well said, sir," answered Quin; "and I wish Kitty here would tell us why she hates Mrs. Woffington, the best-natured woman in the theatre?"

"I don't hate her, I don't trouble my head about her."

"Yes, you hate her; for you never miss a cut at her, never!"

"Do you hate a haunch of venison, Quin?" said the lady.

"No! you little unnatural monster," replied Quin.

"For all that you never miss a cut at one, so hold your tongue!"

"Le beau raisonnement!" said Mr. Cibber. "James Quin, don't interfere with nature's laws; let our ladies hate one another, it eases their minds; try to make them Christians and you will not convert their tempers, but spoil your own. Peggy there hates George Anne Bellamy, because she has gaudy silk dresses from Paris, by paying for them as *she* could, if not too stingy. Kitty here hates Peggy because Rich has breeched her, whereas Kitty, who now sets up for a

prude, wanted to put delicacy off and small clothes on in Peg's stead, that is where the Kate and Peg shoe pinches, near the femoral artery, James."

"Shrimps have the souls of shrimps," resumed this *censor castigatorque minorum.* "Listen to me, and learn that really great actors are great in soul, and do not blubber like a great school-girl because Anne Bellamy has two yellow silk dresses from Paris, as I saw Woffington blubber in this room, and would not be comforted; nor fume like Kitty Clive, because Woffington has a pair of breeches and a little boy's rapier to go a playing at acting with. When I was young, two giantesses fought for empire upon this very stage, where now dwarfs crack and bounce like parched peas. They played Roxana and Statira in the 'Rival Queens.' Rival queens of art themselves, they put out all their strength. In the middle of the last act the town gave judgment in favour of Statira. What did Roxana? Did she spill grease on Statira's robe as Peg Woffington would? or stab her, as I believe Kitty here capable of doing? No! Statira was never so tenderly killed as that night: she owned this to me. Roxana bade the theatre farewell that night, and wrote to Statira thus—I give you word for word: 'Madam, the best judge we have, has decided in your favour. I shall never play second on a stage where I have been first so long, but I shall often be a spectator, and methinks none will appreciate your talent more than I, who have felt its weight. My wardrobe, one of the best in Europe, is of no use to me; if you will honour me by selecting a few of my dresses you will gratify me, and I shall fancy I see myself upon the stage to greater advantage than before.'"

"And what did Statira answer, sir?" said Mr. Vane eagerly.

"She answered thus: 'Madam, the town has often been wrong, and may have been so last night, in supposing that I vied successfully with your merit; but thus much is certain —and here, madam, I am the best judge—that off the stage you have just conquered me. I shall wear with pride any dress you have honoured, and shall feel inspired to great exertions by your presence among our spectators, unless, indeed, the sense of your magnanimity and the recollection of your talent should damp me by the dread of losing any portion of your good opinion.'"

"What a couple of stiff old things," said Mrs. Clive.

"Nay, madam, say not so," cried Vane warmly; "surely,

this was the lofty courtesy of two great minds not to be overbalanced by strife, defeat, or victory."

"What were their names, sir?"

"Statira was the great Mrs. Oldfield. Roxana you will see here to-night."

This caused a sensation.

Colley's reminiscences were interrupted by loud applause from the theatre; the present seldom gives the past a long hearing.

The old war-horse cocked his ears.

"It is Woffington speaking the epilogue," said Quin.

"Oh! she has got the length of their foot, somehow," said a small actress.

"And the breadth of their hands, too," said Pomander, waking from a nap.

"It is the depth of their hearts she has sounded," said Vane.

In those days, if a metaphor started up, the poor thing was coursed up hill and down dale, and torn limb from jacket; even in Parliament, a trope was sometimes hunted from one session into another.

"You were asking me about Mrs. Oldfield, sir," resumed Cibber, rather peevishly. "I will own to you, I lack words to convey a just idea of her double and complete supremacy. But the comedians of this day are weak-strained *farceurs* compared with her, and her tragic tone was thunder set to music.

"I saw a brigadier-general cry like a child at her Indiana; I have seen her crying with pain herself at the wing (for she was always a great sufferer), I have seen her then spring upon the stage as Lady Townley, and in a moment sorrow brightened into joy; the air seemed to fill with singing-birds, that chirped the pleasures of fashion, love, and youth, in notes sparkling like diamonds and stars, and prisms. She was above criticism, out of its scope, as is the blue sky; men went not to judge her, they drank her, and gazed at her, and were warmed at her, and refreshed by her. The fops were awed into silence, and with their humbler betters thanked Heaven for her, if they thanked it for anything.

"In all the crowded theatre, care and pain and poverty were banished from the memory, whilst Oldfield's face spoke, and her tongue flashed melodies; the lawyer forgot his quillets; the polemic, the mote in his brother's eye; the old maid, her grudge against the two sexes; the old man,

his grey hairs and his lost hours. And can it be, that all this, which should have been immortal, is quite—quite lost, is as though it had never been?" he sighed. "Can it be, that its fame is now sustained by me, who twang with my poor lute, cracked and old, these feeble praises of a broken lyre—

> 'Whose wires were golden, and its heavenly air
> More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear,
> When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear?'"

He paused, and his eye looked back over many years: then, with a very different tone, he added—

"And that Jack Falstaff there must have seen her, now I think on't."

"Only once, sir," said Quin, "and I was but ten years old."

"He saw her once, and he was ten years old; yet he calls Woffington a great comedian, and my son The's wife, with her hatchet face, the greatest tragedian he ever saw! Jemmy, what an ass you must be!"

"Mrs. Cibber always makes me cry, and t'other always makes me laugh," said Quin stoutly, "that's why."

Ce beau raisonnement met no answer but a look of sovereign contempt.

A very trifling incident saved the ladies of the British stage from further criticism. There were two candles in this room, one on each side; the call-boy had entered, and poking about for something, knocked down and broke one of these.

"Awkward imp!" cried a velvet page.

"I'll go *to the Treasury* for another, ma'am," said the boy pertly, and vanished with the fractured wax.

I take advantage of the interruption to open Mr. Vane's mind to the reader. First he had been astonished at the freedom of sarcasm these people indulged in without quarrelling; next at the non-respect of sex.

"So sex is not recognised in this community," thought he. Then the glibness and merit of some of their answers surprised and amused him. He, like me, had seldom met an imaginative repartee, except in a play or a book. "Society's" repartees were then, as they are now, the good old tree in various dresses and veils: *Tu quoque, tu mentiris, vos damnemini;* but he was sick and dispirited on the whole;

such very bright illusions had been dimmed in these few minutes.

She was brilliant; but her manners, if not masculine, were very daring; and yet, when she spoke to him, a stranger, how sweet and gentle her voice was! Then it was clear nothing but his ignorance could have placed her at the summit of her art.

Still he clung to his enthusiasm for her. He drew Pomander aside. "What a simplicity there is in Mrs. Woffington!" said he; "the rest, male and female, are all so affected; she is so fresh and natural. They are all hot-house plants; she is a cowslip with the May dew on it."

"What you take for simplicity, is her refined art," replied Sir Charles.

"No!" said Vane, "I never saw a more innocent creature!"

Pomander laughed in his face; this laugh disconcerted him more than words; he spoke no more—he sat pensive. He was sorry he had come to this place, where everybody knew his goddess; yet nobody admired, nobody loved, and alas! nobody respected her.

He was roused from his reverie by a noise; the noise was caused by Cibber falling on Garrick, whom Pomander had maliciously quoted against all the tragedians of Colley Cibber's day.

"I tell you," cried the veteran, "that this Garrick has banished dignity from the stage, and given us in exchange what you and he take for fire; but it is smoke and vapour. His manner is little, like his person, it is all fuss and bustle. This is his idea of a tragic scene: A little fellow comes bustling in, goes bustling about, and runs bustling out." Here Mr. Cibber left the room, to give greater effect to his description, but presently returned in a mighty pother, saying, "'Give me another horse;' Well, where's the horse? don't you see I'm waiting for him? 'Bind up my wounds!' Look sharp now with these wounds. 'Have mercy, Heaven!' but be quick about it, for the pit can't wait for Heaven. Bustle! bustle! bustle!"

The old dog was so irresistibly funny, that the whole company were obliged to laugh, but in the midst of their merriment Mrs. Woffington's voice was heard at the door.

"This way, madam."

A clear and somewhat shrill voice replied, "I know the way better than you, child," and a stately old lady appeared on the threshold.

"Bracegirdle," said Mr. Cibber.

It may well be supposed that every eye was turned on this new comer—that Roxana for whom Mr. Cibber's story had prepared a peculiar interest. She was dressed in a rich green velvet gown with gold fringe. Cibber remembered it; she had played the "Eastern Queen" in it. Heaven forgive all concerned! It was fearfully pinched in at the waist and ribs, so as to give the idea of wood inside, not woman.

Her hair and eyebrows were iron-grey, and she had lost a front tooth, or she would still have been eminently handsome. She was tall and straight as a dart, and her noble port betrayed none of the weakness of age, only it was to be seen that her hands were a little weak, and the gold-headed crutch struck the ground rather sharply, as if it did a little limbs'-duty.

Such was the lady who marched into the middle of the room, with a "How do, Colley?" and looking over the company s heads as if she did not see them, regarded the four walls with some interest. Like a cat, she seemed to think more of places than of folk. The page obsequiously offered her a chair.

"Not so clean as it used to be," said Mrs. Bracegirdle.

Unfortunately, in making this remark, the old lady graciously patted the page's head for offering her the chair; and this action gave, with some of the ill-constituted minds that are ever on the titter, a ridiculous direction to a remark intended, I believe, for the paint and wainscots, &c.

"Nothing is as it used to be," remarked Mr. Cibber.

"All the better for everything," said Mrs. Clive.

"We were laughing at this mighty little David, first actor of this mighty little age."

Now if Mr. Cibber thought to find in the new comer an ally of the past in its indiscriminate attack upon the present, he was much mistaken; for the old actress made onslaught on this nonsense at once.

"Ay, ay," said she, "and not the first time by many hundreds. 'Tis a disease you have. Cure yourself, Colley. Davy Garrick pleases the public; and in trifles like acting, that take nobody to heaven, to please all the world, is to be great. Some pretend to higher aims, but none have 'em. You may hide this from young fools, mayhap, but not from an old 'oman like me. He! he! he! No, no, no—not from an old 'oman like me."

She then turned round in her chair, and with that sudden,

unaccountable snappishness of tone, to which the brisk old are subject, she snarled: "Gie me a pinch of snuff, some of ye, do!"

Tobacco dust was instantly at her disposal. She took it with the points of her fingers, delicately, and divested the crime of half its uncleanness and vulgarity—more an angel couldn't.

"Monstrous sensible woman, though!" whispered Quin to Clive.

"Hey, sir! what do you say, sir? for I'm a little deaf." (Not very to praise, it seems.)

"That your judgment, madam, is equal to the reputation of your talent."

The words were hardly spoken, before the old lady rose upright as a tower. She then made an oblique preliminary sweep, and came down with such a curtsey as the young had never seen.

James Quin, not to disgrace his generation, attempted a corresponding bow, for which his figure and apoplectic tendency rendered him unfit: and whilst he was transacting it, the graceful Cibber stepped gravely up, and looked down and up the process with his glass, like a naturalist inspecting some strange capriccio of an ourang-outang. The gymnastics of courtesy ended without back-falls—Cibber lowered his tone—

"You are right, Bracy. It is nonsense denying the young fellow's talent; but his Othello, now, Bracy! be just—his Othello!"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried she; "I thought it was Desdemona's little black boy come in without the tea-kettle."

Quin laughed uproariously.

"It made me laugh a deal more than Mr. Quin's Falstaff. Oh dear! oh dear!"

"Falstaff, indeed! Snuff!" in the tone of a trumpet.

Quin secretly revoked his good opinion of this woman's sense.

"Madam," said the page timidly, "if you would but favour us with a specimen of the old style!"

"Well, child, why not? Only what makes you mumble like that? but they all do it now, I see. Bless my soul! our words used to come out like brandy-cherries; but now a sentence is like raspberry-jam, on the stage and off."

Cibber chuckled.

"And why don't you men carry yourself like Cibber here?"

"Don't press that question," said Colley drily.

"A monstrous poor actor, though," said the merciless old woman, in a mock aside to the others; "only twenty shillings a-week for half his life;" and her shoulders went up to her ears—then she fell into a half-reverie. "Yes, we were distinct," said she; "but I must own, children, we were slow. Once in the midst of a beautiful tirade, my lover went to sleep, and fell against me. A mighty pretty epigram, twenty lines, was writ on't by one of my gallants. Have ye as many of them as we used?"

"In that respect," said the page, "we are not behind our great-grandmothers."

"I call that pert," said Mrs. Bracegirdle, with the air of one drawing scientific distinctions. "Now, is that a boy or a lady that spoke to me last?"

"By its dress, I should say a boy," said Cibber, with his glass; "by its assurance, a lady!"

"There's one clever woman amongst ye; Peg something, plays Lothario, Lady Betty Modish, and what not?"

"What! admire Woffington?" screamed Mrs. Clive; "why, she is the greatest gabbler on the stage."

"I don't care," was the reply, "there's nature about the jade. Don't contradict me," added she, with sudden fury; "a parcel of children."

"No, madam," said Clive humbly. "Mr. Cibber, will you try and prevail on Mrs. Bracegirdle to favour us with a recitation?"

Cibber handed his cane with pomp to a small actor. Bracegirdle did the same; and striking the attitudes that had passed for heroic in their day, they declaimed out of the "Rival Queens" two or three tirades, which I graciously spare the reader of this tale. Their elocution was neat and silvery; but not one bit like the way people speak in streets, palaces, fields, roads, and rooms. They had not made the grand discovery, which Mr. A. Wigan on the stage, and every man of sense off it, has made in our day and nation; namely, that the stage is a representation not of stage, but of life; and that an actor ought to speak and act in imitation of human beings, not of speaking machines that have run and creaked in a stage groove, with their eyes shut upon the world at large, upon nature, upon truth, upon man, upon woman, and upon child.

"This is slow," cried Cibber; "let us show these young people how ladies and gentlemen moved fifty years ago, *dansons*."

A fiddler was caught, a beautiful slow minuet played, and a bit of "solemn dancing" done. Certainly, it was not gay, but it must be owned it was beautiful; it was the dance of kings, the poetry of the courtly saloon.

The retired actress, however, had frisker notions left in her: "This is slow," cried she, and bade the fiddler play, "The wind that shakes the barley," an ancient jig tune; this she danced to in a style that utterly astounded the spectators.

She showed them what fun was; her feet and her stick were all echoes to the mad strain; out went her heel behind, and returning, drove her four yards forward. She made unaccountable slants, and cut them all over in turn if they did not jump for it. Roars of inextinguishable laughter arose, it would have made an oyster merry. Suddenly she stopped, and put her hands to her sides, and soon after she gave a vehement cry of pain.

The laughter ceased.

She gave another cry of such agony, that they were all round her in a moment.

"Oh! help me, ladies," screamed the poor woman, in tones as feminine as they were heartrending and piteous. "Oh, my back! my loins! I suffer, gentlemen," said the poor thing faintly.

What was to be done? Mr. Vane offered his penknife to cut her laces.

"You shall cut my head off sooner," cried she, with sudden energy. "Don't pity me," said she sadly, "I don't deserve it;" then lifting her eyes, she exclaimed, with a sad air of self-reproach: "Oh, vanity! do you never leave a woman?"

"Nay, madam!" whimpered the page, who was a good-hearted girl; "'twas your great complaisance for us, not vanity. Oh! oh! oh!" and she began to blubber to make matters better.

"No, my children," said the old lady, "'twas vanity. I wanted to show you what an old 'oman could do; and I have humiliated myself, trying to outshine younger folk. I am justly humiliated, as you see," and she began to cry a little.

"This is very painful," said Cibber.

Mrs. Bracegirdle now raised her eyes (they had set her in a chair), and looking sweetly, tenderly, and earnestly, on her old companion, she said to him, slowly, gently, but impressively—

"Colley, at threescore years and ten, this was ill-done of

us! You and I are here now—for what? to cheer the young up the hill we mounted years ago. And, old friend, if we detract from them we discourage them. A great sin in the old!"

"Every dog his day."

"We have had ours." Here she smiled, then laying her hand tenderly in the old man's, she added, with calm solemnity: "And now we must go quietly towards our rest, and strut and fret no more the few last minutes of life's fleeting hour."

How tame my cacotype of these words compared with what they were. I am ashamed of them and myself, and the human craft of writing, which, though commoner far, is so miserably behind the godlike art of speech: *Si ipsam audivisses!*

These ink scratches, which in the imperfection of language we have called words, till the unthinking actually dream they are words, but which are the shadows of the corpses of words; these word-shadows then were living powers on her lips, and subdued, as eloquence always does, every heart within reach of the imperial tongue.

The young loved her, and the old man, softened and vanquished, and mindful of his failing life, was silent, and pressed his handkerchief to his eyes a moment; then he said—

"No, Bracy—no. Be composed, I pray you. She is right. Young people, forgive me that I love the dead too well, and the days when I was what you are now. Drat the woman," continued he, half-ashamed of his emotion; "she makes us laugh, and makes us cry, just as she used."

"What does he say, young woman?" said the old lady drily to Mrs. Clive.

"He says you make us laugh, and make us cry, madam; and so you do me, I'm sure."

"And that's Peg Woffington's notion of an actress! Better it, Cibber and Bracegirdle, if you can," said the other, rising up like lightning.

She then threw Colley Cibber a note, and walked coolly and rapidly out of the room, without looking once behind her.

The rest stood transfixed, looking at one another, and at the empty chair. Then Cibber opened and read the note aloud. It was from Mrs. Bracegirdle: "Playing at tric-trac; so can't play the fool in your green-room to-night.—B."

On this, a musical ringing laugh was heard from outside

the door, where the pseudo Bracegirdle was washing the grey from her hair, and the wrinkles from her face—ah! I wish I could do it as easily!—and the little bit of sticking-plaster from her front tooth.

"Why, it is the Irish jade!" roared Cibber.

"Divil a less!" rang back a rich brogue; "and it's not the first time we put the comether upon ye, England, my jewal!"

One more mutual glance, and then the mortal cleverness of all this began to dawn on their minds; and they broke forth into clapping of hands, and gave this accomplished *mime* three rounds of applause; Mr. Vane and Sir Charles Pomander leading with "Brava, Woffington!"

Its effect on Mr. Vane may be imagined. Who but she could have done this? This was as if a painter should so paint a man as to deceive his species. This was acting, but not like the acting of the stage. He was in transports, and self-satisfaction at his own judgment mingled pleasantly with his admiration.

In this cheerful exhibition, one joined not—Mr. Cibber. His theories had received a shock (and we all love our theories). He himself had received a rap, and we don't hate ourselves.

Great is the syllogism! But there is a class of arguments less vulnerable.

If A says to B, "You can't hit me, as I prove by this syllogism" (here followeth the syllogism), "and B, *pour toute réponse*, knocks A down such a whack that he rebounds into a sitting posture; and to him the man, the tree, the lamp-post, and the fire-escape, become not clearly distinguishable; this barbarous logic prevails against the logic in Barbara, and the syllogism is in the predicament of Humpty Dumpty.

In this predicament was the Poet Laureate. "The miscreant Proteus (could not) escape these chains!" So the miscreant Proteus—no bad name for an old actor—took his little cocked-hat and marched; a smaller, if not a wiser man. Some disjointed words fell from him: "Mimicry is not acting," &c.; and with one bitter, mowing glance at the applauders, *circumferens acriter oculos*, he vanished in the largest pinch of snuff on record. The rest dispersed more slowly.

Mr. Vane waited eagerly, and watched the door for Mrs. Woffington; but she did not come. He then made acquaintance with good-natured Mr. Quin, who took him upon the stage, and showed him by what vulgar appliances that majestic

rise of the curtain he so admired was effected. Returning to the green-room for his friend, he found him in animated conversation with Mrs. Woffington. This made Vane uneasy.

Sir Charles, up to the present moment of the evening, had been unwontedly silent, and now he was talking nineteen to the dozen, and Mrs. Woffington was listening with an appearance of interest that sent a pang to poor Vane's heart; he begged Mr. Quin to introduce him.

Mr. Quin introduced him.

The lady received his advances with polite composure. Mr. Vane stammered his admiration of her Bracegirdle; but all he could find words to say, was mere general praise, and somewhat coldly received. Sir Charles, on the contrary, spoke more like a critic. "Had you given us the stage cackle, or any of those traditionary symptoms of old age, we should have instantly detected you," said he; "but this was art copying nature, and it may be years before such a triumph of illusion is again effected under so many adverse circumstances."

"You are very good, Sir Charles," was the reply. "You flatter me. It was one of those things which look greater than they are; nobody here knew Bracegirdle but Mr. Cibber; Mr. Cibber cannot see well without his glasses, and I got rid of one of the candles; I sent one of the imps of the theatre to knock it down. I know Mrs. Bracegirdle by heart. I drink tea with her every Sunday. I had her dress on, and I gave the old boy her words and her way of thinking; it was mere mimicry; it was nothing compared with what I once did; but, ahem!"

"Pray tell us!"

"I am afraid I shall shock your friend. I see he is not a wicked man like you, and perhaps does not know what good-for-nothing creatures actresses are."

"He is not so ignorant as he looks," replied Sir Charles.

"That is not quite the answer I expected, Sir Charles," replied this lively lady; "but it serves me right, for fishing on dry land. Well then, you must know a young gentleman courted me. I forget whether I liked him or not; but you will fancy I hated him, for I promised to marry him. You must understand, gentlemen, that I was sent into the world, not to act, which I abominate, but to chronicle small beer and teach an army of little brats their letters; so this word "wife," and that word "chimney-corner," took possession of my mind, and a vision of darning stockings for a large party,

all my own, filled my heart, and really I felt quite grateful to the little brute that was to give me all this, and he would have had such a wife as men never do have, still less deserve. But one fine day that the theatre left me time to examine his manner towards me, I instantly discovered he was deceiving me. So I had him watched, and the little brute was going to marry another woman, and break it to me by degrees afterwards, &c. You know, Sir Charles? Ah! I see you do.

"I found her out; got an introduction to her father; went down to his house three days before the marriage, with a little coal-black moustache, regimentals, and what not, made up, in short, with the art of my sex, gentlemen—and the impudence of yours.

"The first day I flirted and danced with the bride. The second I made love to her, and at night I let her know that her intended was a villain. I showed her letters of his; protestations, oaths of eternal fidelity to one Peg Woffington, 'who will die,' drawled I, 'if he betrays her.'

"And here, gentlemen, mark the justice of Heaven. I received a back-handed slap: 'Peg Woffington! an actress! Oh, the villain!' cried she; 'let him marry the little vagabond. How dare he insult me with his hand that had been offered in such a quarter?'

"So, in a fit of virtuous indignation, the little hypocrite dismissed the little brute; in other words, she had fallen in love with me.

"I have not had many happy hours, but I remember it was delicious to look out of my window, and at the same moment smell the honeysuckles and see my *perfide* dismissed under a heap of scorn and a pile of luggage he had brought down for his wedding tour.

"I scampered up to London, laughing all the way; and when I got home, if I remember right, I cried for two hours. How do you account for that?"

"I hope, madam," said Vane gravely, "it was remorse for having trifled with that poor young lady's heart; she had never injured you."

"But, sir, the husband I robbed her of was a brute and a villain in his little way, and wicked, and good-for-nothing, &c. He would have deceived that poor little hypocrite, as he had this one," pointing to herself.

"That is not what I mean; you inspired her with an attachment, never to be forgotten. Poor lady, how many sleepless nights has she passed since then, how many times

has she strained her eyes to see her angel lover returning to her! She will not forget in two years the love it cost you but two days to inspire. The powerful should be merciful. Ah! I fear you have no heart."

These words had no sooner burst from Mr. Vane, than he was conscious of the strange liberty he had taken, and, indeed, the bad taste he had been guilty of; and this feeling was not lessened when he saw Mrs. Woffington colour up to the temples. Her eyes, too, glittered like basilisks; but she said nothing, which was remarkable in her, whose tongue was the sword of a *maître d'armes*.

Sir Charles eyed his friend in a sly, satirical manner; he then said laughingly, "In two months *she married a third!* don't waste your sympathy," and turned the talk into another channel; and soon after, Mrs. Woffington's maid appearing at the door, she curtsied to both gentlemen and left the theatre. Sir Charles Pomander accompanied Mr. Vane a little way.

"What becomes of her innocence?" was his first word.

"One loses sight of it in her immense talent," said the lover.

"She certainly is clever in all that bears upon her business," was the reply; "but I noticed you were a little shocked with her indelicacy in telling us that story, and still more in having it to tell."

"Indelicacy? No!" said Vane; "the little brute deserved it. Good Heavens! to think that 'a little brute' might have married that angel, and actually broke faith to lose her; it is incredible, the crime is diluted by the absurdity."

"Have you heard him tell the story? No? Then take my word for it you have not heard the facts of the case."

"Ah! you are prejudiced against her?"

"On the contrary, I like her. But I know that with all women, the present lover is an angel and the past a demon, and so on in turn. And I know that if Satan were to enter the women of the stage, with the wild idea of impairing their veracity, he would come out of their minds a greater liar than he went in, and the innocent darlings would never know their spiritual father had been at them.

Doubtful whether this sentiment and period could be improved, Sir Charles parted with his friend, leaving his sting in him like a friend; the other's reflections as he sauntered home were not strictly those of a wise, well-balanced mind; they ran in this style—

"When she said, 'Is not that to praise my person at the

expense of my wit?' I ought to have said, 'Nay, madam; could your wit disguise your person, it would betray itself, so you would still shine confessed,' and instead of that I said nothing!"

He then ran over in his mind all the opportunities he had had for putting in something smart, and bitterly regretted those lost opportunities; and made the smart things, and beat the air with them. Then his cheeks tingled when he remembered that he had almost scolded her; and he concocted a very different speech, and straightway repeated it in imagination.

This is lovers' pastime; I own it funny; but it is open to one objection, this single practice of sitting upon eggs no longer chickenable, carried to a habit, is capable of turning a solid intellect into a liquid one, and ruining a mind's career.

We leave Mr. Vane, therefore, with a hope that he will not do it every night; and we follow his friend to the close of our chapter.

Hey for a definition!

What is diplomacy? Is it folly in a coat that looks like sagacity? Had Sir Charles Pomander, instead of watching Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington, asked the former whether he admired the latter, and whether the latter responded, straightforward Vane would have told him the whole truth in a minute. Diplomacy therefore was, as it often is, a waste of time.

But diplomacy did more in this case, it *sapienter descendebat in fossam;* it fell on its nose with gymnastic dexterity, as it generally does, upon my word.

To watch Mrs. Woffington's face *vis-à-vis* Mr. Vane, Pomander introduced Vane to the green-room of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. By this Pomander learned nothing, because Mrs. Woffington had, with a wonderful appearance of openness, the closest face in Europe when she chose.

On the other hand, by introducing this country gentleman to this green-room, he gave a mighty impulse and opportunity to Vane's love; an opportunity which he forgot the timid, inexperienced Damon might otherwise never have found.

Here diplomacy was not policy, for, as my sagacious reader has perhaps divined, Sir Charles Pomander *was after her himself.*

CHAPTER III

YES: Sir Charles was *after* Miss Woffington. I use that phrase because it is a fine generic one, suitable to different kinds of love-making.

Mr. Vane's sentiments were an inexplicable compound; but respect, enthusiasm, and deep admiration were the uppermost.

The good Sir Charles was no enigma; he had a vacancy in his establishment—a very high situation, too, for those who like that sort of thing—the head of his table, his left hand when he drove in the Park, &c. To this he proposed to promote Miss Woffington. She was handsome and witty, and he liked her. But that was not what caused him to pursue her; slow, sagacious, inevitable, as a beagle.

She was celebrated, and would confer great *éclat* on him. The scandal of possessing her was a burning temptation. Women admire celebrity in a man; but men adore it in a woman.

> "The world," says Philip, "is a famous man;
> What will not women love so taught?"

I will try to answer this question.

The women will more readily forgive disgusting physica deformity for Fame's sake, than we. They would embrace with more rapture a famous ourang-outang, than we an illustrious chimpanzee; but when it comes to moral deformity the tables are turned.

Had the Queen pardoned Mr. Greenacre and Mrs. Manning, would the great rush have been on the hero, or the heroine? Why, on Mrs. Macbeth! To her would the blackguards have brought honourable proposals, and the gentry liberal ones.

Greenacre would have found more female admirers than I ever shall; but the grand stream of sexual admiration would have set Mariawards. This fact is as dark as night; but it is as sure as the sun.

The next day "the friends" (most laughable of human substantives!) met in the theatre, and again visited the green-room; and this time Vane determined to do himself more justice. He was again disappointed; the actress's manner was ceremoniously polite. She was almost con-

stantly on the stage, and in a hurry when off it; and when there was a word to be got with her, the ready, glib Sir Charles was sure to get it. Vane could not help thinking it hard that a man who professed no respect for her should thus keep the light from him; and he could hardly conceal his satisfaction, when Pomander, at night, bade him farewell for a fortnight. Pressing business took Sir Charles into the country.

The good Sir Charles, however, could not go without leaving his sting behind as a companion to his friend. He called on Mr. Vane, and after a short preface, containing the words, "our friendship," "old kindness," "my greater experience," he gravely warned him against Mrs. Woffington.

"Not that I would say this if you could take her for what she is, and amuse yourself with her as she will with you, if she thinks it worth her while. But I see you have a heart, and she will make a football of it, and torment you beyond all you have ever conceived of human anguish."

Mr. Vane coloured high, and was about to interrupt the speaker; but he continued—

"There, I am in a hurry. But ask Quin, or anybody who knows her history; you will find she has had scores of lovers, and no one remains her friend after they part."

"Men are such villains!"

"Very likely," was the reply; "but twenty men don't ill-use one good woman: those are not the proportions. Adieu!"

This last hit frightened Mr. Vane, he began to look into himself; he could not but feel that he was a mere child in this woman's hands; and more than that, his conscience told him that if his heart should be made a football of it would only be a just and probable punishment. For there were particular reasons why he, of all men, had no business to look twice at any woman whose name was Woffington.

That night he avoided the green-room, though he could not forego the play; but the next night he determined to stay at home altogether. Accordingly, at five o'clock, the astounded box-keeper wore a visage of dismay—there was no shilling for him! and Mr. Vane's nightly shilling had assumed the sanctity of salary in his mind.

Mr. Vane strolled disconsolate: he strolled by the Thames, he strolled up and down the Strand; and, finally, having often admired the wisdom of moths in their gradual approach to what is not good for them, he strolled into the green-room, Covent Garden, and sat down. When there he did not feel

happy. Besides, she had always been cold to him, and had given no sign of desiring his acquaintance, still less of recognition.

Mr. Vane had often seen a weathercock at work, and he had heard a woman compared to it; but he had never realised the simplicity, beauty, and justice of the simile. He was therefore surprised, as well as thrilled, when Mrs. Woffington, so cool, ceremonious, and distant hitherto, walked up to him in the green-room with a face quite wreathed in smiles, and without preliminary, thanked him for all the beautiful flowers he had sent her.

"What, Mrs. Woffington—what, you recognise me?"

"Of course, and have been foolish enough to feel quite supported by the thought, I had at least one friend in the house. But," said she, looking down, "now you must not be angry; here are some stones that have fallen somewhow among the flowers; I am going to give you them back, because I value flowers, so I cannot have them mixed with anything else; but don't ask me for a flower back," added she, seeing the colour mount on his face, "for I would not give one of them to you, or anybody."

Imagine the effect of this on a romantic disposition like Mr. Vane's.

He told her how glad he was that she could distinguish his features amidst the crowd of her admirers; he confessed he had been mortified when he found himself, as he thought, entirely a stranger to her.

She interrupted him.

"Do you know your friend Sir Charles Pomander? No! I am almost sure you do; well, he is a man I do not like. He is deceitful, besides he is a wicked man. There, to be plain with you, he was watching me all that night, the first time you came here, and because I saw he was watching me, I would not know who you were, nor anything about you."

"But you looked as if you had never seen me before."

"Of course I did, when I had made up my mind to," said the actress naïvely.

"Sir Charles has left London for a fortnight, so if he is the only obstacle, I hope you will know me every night."

"Why, you sent me no flowers yesterday, or to-day."

"But I will to-morrow."

"Then I am sure I shall know your face again: good-bye. Won't you see me in the last act, and tell me how ill I do it?"

"Oh yes!" and he hurried to his box, and so the actress secured one pair of hands for her last act.

He returned to the green-room, but she did not revisit that verdant bower. The next night, after the usual compliments, she said to him, looking down with a sweet, engaging air—

"I sent a messenger into the country to know about that lady."

"What lady?" said Vane, scarcely believing his senses.

"That you were so unkind to me about."

"I, unkind to you? what a brute I must be!"

"My meaning is, you justly rebuked me, only you should not tell an actress she has no heart—that is always understood. Well, Sir Charles Pomander said she married a third in two months!"

"And did she?"

"No, it was in six weeks; that man never tells the truth, and since then she has married a fourth."

"I am glad of it!"

"So am I, since you awakened my conscience."

Delicious flattery! and of all flattery the sweetest when a sweet creature does flattery, not merely utters it.

After this Vane made no more struggles; he surrendered himself to the charming seduction, and as his advances were respectful, but ardent and incessant, he found himself at the end of a fortnight Mrs. Woffington's professed lover.

They wrote letters to each other every day. On Sunday they went to church together in the morning, and spent the afternoon in the suburbs wherever grass was and dust was not.

In the next fortnight, poor Vane thought he had pretty well fathomed this extraordinary woman's character. Plumb the Atlantic with an eighty-fathom line, sir!

"She is religious," said he, "she loves a church much better than a play-house, and she never laughs nor goes to sleep in church as I do. And she is breaking me of swearing—by degrees. She says that no fashion can justify what is profane, and that it must be vulgar as well as wicked. And she is frankness and simplicity itself."

Another thing that charmed him was her disinterestedness. She ordered him to buy her a present every day, but it was never to cost above a shilling. If an article could be found that cost exactly tenpence (a favourite sum of hers), she was particularly pleased, and these shilling presents were received with a flush of pleasure and brightening eyes: but when one day he appeared with a diamond necklace, it was taken very coldly, he was not even thanked for it, and he was made to

feel, once for all, that the tenpenny ones were the best investments towards her favour.

Then he found out that she was very prudent and rather stingy; of Spartan simplicity in her diet, and a scorner of dress off the stage. To redeem this she was charitable, and her charity and her economy sometimes had a sore fight, during which she was peevish, poor little soul.

One day she made him a request.

"I can't bear you should think me worse than I am, and I don't want you to think me better than I am."

Vane trembled.

"But don't speak to others about me; promise, and I will promise to tell you my whole story, whenever you are entitled to such a confidence."

"When shall I be entitled to it?"

"When I am sure you love me."

"Do you doubt that now?"

"Yes! I think you love me, but I am not sure."

"Margaret, remember I have known you much longer than you have known me."

"No!"

"Yes! Two months before we ever spoke I lived upon your face and voice."

"That is to say, you looked from your box at me upon the stage, and did not I look from the stage at you?"

"Never! you always looked at the pit, and my heart used to sink."

"On the 17th of May you first came into that box. I noticed you a little, the next day I noticed you a little more; I saw you fancied you liked me, after a while I could not have played without you."

Here was delicious flattery again, and poor Vane believed every word of it.

As for her request and her promise, she showed her wisdom in both these. As Sir Charles observed, it is a wonderful point gained if you allow a woman to tell her story her own way.

How the few facts that are allowed to remain, get moulded and twisted out of ugly forms into pretty shapes by those supple, dexterous fingers!

This present story cannot give the life of Mrs. Woffington, but only one great passage therein, as do the epic and dramatic writers; but since there was often great point in any sentences spoken on important occasions by this lady,

I will just quote her defence of herself. The reader may be sure she did not play her weakest card; let us give her the benefit.

One day she and Kitty Clive were at it ding-dong; the green-room was full of actors, male and female, but there were no strangers, and the ladies were saying things which the men of this generation only think; at last Mrs. Woffington finding herself roughly, and, as she thought, unjustly handled, turned upon the assembly and said, "What man did ever I ruin in all my life? Speak who can!"

And there was a dead silence.

"What woman is there here, at as much as three pounds per week even, that hasn't ruined two at the very least?"

Report says there was a dead silence again, until Mrs. Clive perked up, and said she had only ruined one, and that was his own fault!

Mrs. Woffington declined to attach weight to this example. "Kitty Clive is the hook without the bait," said she; and the laugh turned, as it always did, against Peggy's antagonist.

Thus much was speedily shown to Mr. Vane, that whatever were Mrs. Woffington's intentions towards him, interest had at present nothing to do with them; indeed it was made clear that even were she to surrender her liberty to him, it would only be as a princess, forging golden chains for herself with her own royal hand.

Another fortnight passed to the mutual satisfaction of the lovers. To Vane it was a dream of rapture to be near this great creature, whom thousands admired at such a distance; to watch over her, to take her to the theatre in a warm shawl, to stand at the wing and receive her as she came radiant from her dressing-room, to watch her from her rear as she stood like some power about to descend on the stage, to see her falcon-like stoop upon the said stage, and hear the burst of applause that followed, as the report does the flash; to compare this with the spiritless crawl with which common artistes went on, tame from their first note to their last; to take her hand when she came off, feel how her nerves were strung like a greyhound's after a race, and her whole frame in a high even glow, with the great Pythoness excitement of art.

And to have the same great creature leaning her head on his shoulder, and listening with a charming complacency, whilst he purred to her of love and calm delights, alternate with still greater triumphs; for he was to turn dramatic writer, for her sake was to write plays, a woman the hero,

and love was to inspire him, and passion supply the want of pencraft. (You make me laugh, Mr. Vane!)

All this was heavenly.

And then with all her dash, and fire, and bravado, she was a thorough woman.

"Margaret!"

"Ernest!"

"I want to ask you a question. Did you really cry because that Miss Bellamy had dresses from Paris?"

"It does not seem very likely."

"No, but tell me; did you?"

"Who said I did?"

"Mr. Cibber."

"Old fool!"

"Yes, but did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Cry!"

"Ernest, the minx's dresses were beautiful."

"No doubt. But did you cry?"

"And mine were dirty; I don't care about gilt rags, but dirty dresses, ugh!"

"Tell me, then."

"Tell you what?"

"Did you cry or not?"

"Ah! he wants to find out whether I am a fool, and despise me."

"No, I think I should love you better: for hitherto I have seen no weakness in you, and it makes me uncomfortable."

"Be comforted! Is it not a weakness to like you?"

"You are free from that weakness, or you would gratify my curiosity."

"Be pleased to state, in plain intelligible English, what you require of me."

"I want to know, in one word, did you cry or not?"

"Promise to tease me no more then, and I'll tell you."

"I promise."

"You won't despise me?"

"Despise you! of course not."

"Well then—I don't remember!"

On another occasion, they were seated in the dusk, by the side of the canal in the Park, when a little animal began to potter about on an adjacent bank.

Mrs. Woffington contemplated it with curiosity and delight.

"Oh, you pretty creature!" said she. "Now you are a rabbit: at least I think so."

"No," said Vane innocently; "that is a rat."

"Ah! ah! ah!" screamed Mrs. Woffington, and pinched his arm. This frightened the rat, who disappeared. She burst out laughing: "There's a fool! The thing did not frighten me, and the name did. Depend upon it, it's true what they say—that off the stage, I am the greatest fool there is. I'll never be so absurd again. Ah! ah! ah! here it is again" (scream and pinch, as before). "Do take me from this horrid place, where monsters come from the great deep."

And she flounced away, looking daggers askant at the place the rat had vacated in equal terror.

All this was silly, but it pleases us men, and contrast is so charming! This same fool was brimful of talent—and cunning, too, for that matter.

She played late that night, and Mr. Vane saw the same creature, who dared not stay where she was liable to a distant rat, spring upon the stage as a gay rake, and flash out her rapier, and act valour's king to the life, and seem ready to eat up everybody, King Fear included; and then, after her brilliant sally upon the public, Sir Harry Wildair came and stood beside Mr. Vane.

Her bright skin, contrasted with her powdered periwig, became dazzling. She used little rouge, but that little made her eyes two balls of black lightning. From her high instep to her polished forehead, all was symmetry. Her leg would have been a sculptor's glory; and the curve from her waist to her knee, was Hogarth's line itself.

She stood like Mercury new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill. She placed her foot upon the ground, as she might put a hand upon her lover's shoulder. We indent it with our eleven undisguised stone.

Such was Sir Harry Wildair, who stood by Mr. Vane, glittering with diamond buckles, gorgeous with rich satin breeches, velvet coat, ruffles, *pictai cestis et auri;* and as she bent her long eye-fringes down on him (he was seated), all her fiery charms gradually softened and quivered down to womanhood.

"The first time I was here," said Vane, "my admiration of you broke out to Mr. Cibber; and what do you think he said?"

"That you praised me, for me to hear you. Did you?"

"Acquit me of such meanness."

"Forgive me. It is just what I should have done, had I been courting an actress."

"I think you have not met many ingenuous spirits, dear friend?"

"Not one, my child."

This was a phrase she often applied to him now.

"The old fellow pretended to hear what I said, too; and I am sure you did not—did you?"

"Guess."

"I guess not."

"I am afraid I must plead guilty. An actress's ears are so quick to hear praise, to tell you the truth, I did catch a word or two, and, 'It told, sir—it told."

"You alarm me! At this rate, I shall never know what you see, hear, or think, by your face."

"When you want to know anything, ask me and I will tell you; but nobody else shall learn anything, nor even you, any other way."

"Did you hear the feeble tribute of praise I was paying you, when you came in?" inquired Vane.

"No. You did not say that my voice had the compass and variety of nature, and my movements were free and beautiful, whilst the others when in motion were stilts, and coffee-pots when in repose, did you?"

"Something of the sort, I believe," cried Vane, laughing.

"I melted from one fine statue into another, I restored the Antinous to his true sex.—Goose!—Painters might learn their art from me (in my dressing-room, no doubt), and orators revive at my lips the music of Athens, that quelled mad mobs and princes drunk with victory.—Silly fellow!—Praise was never so sweet to me," murmured she, inclining like a goddess of love towards him: and he fastened on two velvet lips, that did not shun the sweet attack, but gently parted with a heavenly sigh; while her heaving bosom, and yielding frame, and swimming eyes, confessed her conqueror.

That morning Mr. Vane had been dispirited, and apparently self-discontented; but at night he went home in a state of mental intoxication. His poetic enthusiasm, his love, his vanity, were all gratified at once. And all these, singly, have conquered Prudence and virtue a million times.

She had confessed to him that she was disposed to risk her happiness on him; she had begged him to submit to a short probation; and she had promised, if her confidence and esteem remained unimpaired at the close of that period—which was

not to be an unhappy one—to take advantage of the summer holidays, and cross the water with him, and forget everything in the world with him, but love.

How was it that the very next morning, clouds chased one another across his face? Was it that men are happy, but while the chase is doubtful? Was it the letter from Pomander announcing his return, and sneeringly inquiring whether he was still the dupe of Peg Woffington? or was it that same mysterious disquiet which attacked him periodically, and then gave way for a while to pleasure and her golden dreams?

The next day was to be a day of delight. He was to entertain her at his own house; and to do her honour, he had asked Mr. Cibber, Mr. Quin, and other actors, critics, &c.

Our friend Sir Charles Pomander had been guilty of two ingenuities: first, he had written three or four letters, full of respectful admiration, to Mrs. Woffington, of whom he spoke slightingly to Vane; second, he had made a disingenuous purchase.

This purchase was Pompey, Mrs. Woffington's little black slave. It is a horrid fact, but Pompey did not love his mistress: he was a little enamoured of her, as small boys are apt to be, but on the whole, a sentiment of hatred slightly predominated in his little black bosom.

It was not without excuse.

This lady was subject to two unpleasant companions, sorrow and bitterness. About twice a-week she would cry for two hours; and after this class of fit she generally went abroad, and made a round of certain poor or sick *protégés* she had, and returned smiling and cheerful.

But other twice a week she might be seen to sit upon her chair, contracted into half her size, and looking daggers at the universe in general, the world in particular; and on these occasions, it must be owned, she stayed at home, and sometimes whipped Pompey.

Pompey had not the sense to reflect that he ought to have been whipped every day, or the *esprit de corps* to be consoled by observing that this sort of thing did his mistress good. What he felt was, that his mistress, who did everything well, whipped him with energy and skill; it did not take ten seconds, but still, in that brief period, Pompey found himself dusted and polished off.

The sacred principle of justice was as strong in Mrs. Woffington as in the rest of her sex, she had not one grain of it. When she was not in her tantrums, the mischievous imp

was as sacred from check or remonstrance as a monkey, or a lap-dog; and several female servants left the house on his account.

But Nemesis overtook him in the way we have hinted, and it put his little black pipe out.

The lady had taken him out of great humanity; he was fed like a game-cock, and dressed like a Barbaric prince; and once, when he was ill, his mistress watched him, and nursed him, and tended him with the same white hand that plied the obnoxious whip; and when he died, she alone withheld her consent from his burial, and this gave him a chance black boys never get, and he came-to again; but still these tarnation lickings "stuck in him gizzard." So when Sir Charles's agent proposed to him certain silver coins, cheap at a little treachery, the ebony ape grinned till he turned half-ivory, and became a spy in the house of his mistress.

The reader will have gathered that the good Sir Charles had been quietly in London some hours before he announced himself as *paulo post futurum*.

Diamond cut diamond; a diplomatic stole this march upon an actress, and took her black pawn. One for Pomander! (Gun.)

CHAPTER IV

Triplet, the Cerberus of art, who had the first bark in this legend, and has since been out of hearing, ran from Lambeth to Covent Garden, on receipt of Mr. Vane's note. But ran he never so quick, he had built a full-sized castle in the air before he reached Bow Street.

The letter hinted at an order upon his muse for amatory verse: delightful task, cheering prospect.

Bid a man whose usual lot it is to break stones for the parish at tenpence the cubic yard; bid such an one play at marbles with stone taws for half an hour per day, and pocket one pound one. Bid a poor horse who has drawn those stones about, and browsed short grass by the wayside, bid him canter a few times round a grassy ring, and then go to his corn. In short, bid Rosinante change with Pegasus, and you do no more than Mr. Vane's letter held out to Triplet.

The amatory verse of that day was not up-hill work. There was a beaten track on a dead level, and you followed

it. You told the tender creature, with a world of circumlocution, that, "without joking now," she was a leper, ditto a tigress, item marble. You next feigned a lucid interval, and to be on the point of detesting your monster, but in twenty more verses love became, as usual, stronger than reason, and you wound up your rotten yarn thus—

You hugged a golden chain. You drew deeper into your wound a barbed shaft, like—(any wild animal will do, no one of them is such an ass, so you had an equal title to all); and on looking back you saw with horrible complacency that you had inflicted one hundred locusts, five feet long, upon oppressed humanity.

Wont to travel over acres of canvas for a few shillings, and roods of paper on bare speculation, Triplet knew he could make a thousand a-year at the above work without thinking.

He came therefore to the box-keeper with his eyes glittering.

"Mr. Vane?"

"Just gone out with a gentleman."

"I'll wait then."

Now Mr. Vane, we know, was in the green-room, and went home by the stage-door. The last thing he thought of was poor Triplet; the rich do not dream how they disappoint the poor. Triplet's castle fell as many a predecessor had. When the lights were put out, he left the theatre with a bitter sigh.

"If this gentleman knew how many sweet children I have, and what a good, patient, suffering wife, sure he would not have chosen me to make a fool of!" said the poor fellow to himself.

In Bow Street, he turned, and looked back upon the theatre. How gloomy and grand it loomed!

"Ah!" thought he, "if I could but conquer you; and why not? All history shows that nothing is unconquerable except perseverance. Hannibal conquered the Alps, and I'll conquer you," cried Triplet firmly. "Yes, this visit is not lost; here I register a vow: I will force my way into that mountain of masonry, or perish in the attempt."

Triplet's most unpremeditated thoughts and actions often savoured ridiculously of the sublime. Then and there, gazing with folded arms on this fortress of Thespis, the polytechnic man organised his first assault. The next evening he made it.

Five months previously he had sent the manager three great, large tragedies. He knew the aversion a theatrical

manager has to read a manuscript play, not recommended by influential folk; an aversion which always has been carried to superstition. So he hit on the following scheme:

He wrote Mr. Rich a letter; in this, he told Mr. Rich that he (Triplet) was aware what a quantity of trash is offered every week to a manager, how disheartening it must be to read it all, and how natural, after a while, to read none. Therefore, he (Triplet) had provided that Mr. Rich might economise his time, and yet not remain in ignorance of the dramatic treasure that lay ready to his hand.

"The soul of a play," continued Triplet, "is the plot or fable. A gentleman of your experience can decide at once whether a plot or story is one to take the public!"

So then he drew out, in full, the three plots. He wrote these plots in verse! Heaven forgive us all, he really did. There were also two margins left; on one, which was narrow, he jotted down the *locale* per page of the most brilliant passages; on the other margin, which was as wide as the column of the plot, he made careful drawings of the personages in the principal dramatic situations; scrolls issued from their mouths, on which were written the words of fire that were flowing from each in these eruptions of the dramatic action. All was referred to pages in the manuscripts.

"By this means, sir," resumed the latter, "you will gut my fish in a jiffy; permit me to recall that expression, with apologies for my freedom. I would say, you will, in a few minutes of your valuable existence, skim the cream of Triplet."

This author s respect for the manager's time, carried him into farther and unusual details.

"Breakfast," said he, "is a quiet meal. Let me respectfully suggest, that by placing one of my plots on the table, with, say, the sugar-basin upon it (this, again, is a mere suggestion), and the play it appertains to on your other side; you can readily judge my work without disturbing the avocations of the day, and master a play in the twinkling of a teacup; forgive my facetiousness. This day month, at ten of the clock, I shall expect," said Triplet, with sudden severity, "sir, your decision!"

Then gliding back to the courtier, he formally disowned all special title to the consideration he expected from Mr. Rich's well-known courtesy; still, he begged permission to remind that gentleman, that he had six years ago painted for him a large scene, illuminated by two great poetical incidents: a

red sun, of dimensions never seen out of doors in this or any country; and an ocean of sand, yellower than up to that time had been attained in art or nature; and that once, when the audience, late in the evening, had suddenly demanded a popular song from Mr. Nokes, he (Triplet) seeing the orchestra thinned by desertion, and nugatory by intoxication, had started from the pit, resuscitated with the whole contents of his snuff-box, the bass fiddle, snatched the leader's violin, and carried Mr. Nokes triumphantly through; that thunders of applause had followed, and Mr. Nokes had kindly returned thanks *for both;* but that he (Triplet) had hastily retired to evade the manager's acknowledgments, preferring to wait an opportunity like the present, when both interests could be conciliated, &c.

This letter he posted at its destination, to save time, and returned triumphant home. He had now forgiven and almost forgotten Vane; and had reflected that, after all, the drama was his proper walk.

"My dear," said he to Mrs. Triplet, "this family is on the eve of a great triumph!" Then, inverting that order of the grandiloquent and the homely which he invented in our first chapter, he proceeded to say: "I have reared in a single day a new avenue, by which histrionic greatness, hitherto obstructed, may become accessible. Wife, I think I have done the trick at last. Lysimachus!" added he, "let a libation be poured out on so smiling an occasion, and a burnt-offering rise to propitiate the celestial powers. Run to the 'Sun,' you dog. Three pennyworth of ale, and a hap'orth o' tobacco."

Ere the month was out, I am sorry to say, the Triplets were reduced to a state of beggary. Mrs. Triplet's health had long been failing; and although her duties at her little theatre were light and occasional, the manager was obliged to discharge her, since she could not be depended upon.

The family had not enough to eat! Think of that! They were not warm at night, and they felt gnawing and faintness often by day. Think of that!

Fortune was unjust here. The man was laughable, and a goose; and had no genius either for writing, painting, or acting; but in that he resembled most writers, painters, and actors of his own day and ours. He was not beneath the average of what men call art, and it is art's antipodes—treadmill artifice.

Other fluent ninnies shared gain, and even fame, and were called "pen-men," in Triplet's day. Other ranters were

quietly getting rich by noise. Other liars and humbugs were painting out o' doors in-doors, and eating mutton instead of thistles for drenched stinging-nettles, yclept trees; for block-tin clouds; for butlers' pantry seas, and garret-conceived lakes; for molten sugar-candy rivers; for airless atmosphere and sunless air; for carpet nature, and cold dead fragments of an earth all soul and living glory to every cultivated eye but a routine painter's. Yet the man of many such mediocrities could not keep the pot boiling. We suspect that to those who would rise in life, even strong versatility is a very doubtful good, and weak versatility ruination.

At last, the bitter, weary month was gone, and Triplet's eye brightened gloriously. He donned his best suit; and whilst tying his cravat, lectured his family. First, he complimented them upon their deportment in adversity; hinted that moralists, not experience, had informed him prosperity was far more trying to the character. Put them all solemnly on their guard down to Lucy, ætat five, that they were *morituri* and *æ*, and must be pleased to abstain from "insolent gladness" upon his return.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity!" continued this cheerful monitor. "If we had not been hard-up this while, we should not come with a full relish to meat three times a-week, which, unless I am an ass (and I don't see myself in that light)," said Triplet drily, "will, I apprehend, be, after this day, the primary condition of our future existence."

"James, take the picture with you," said Mrs. Triplet, in one of those calm, little desponding voices that fall upon the soul so agreeably when one is a cock-a-hoop, and desires, with permission, so to remain.

"What on earth am I to take Mrs. Woffington's portrait for?"

"We have nothing in the house," said the wife, blushing.

Triplet's eye glittered like a rattlesnake's.

"The intimation is eccentric," said he. "Are you mad, Jane? Pray," continued he, veiling his wrath in scornful words, "is it requisite, heroic, or judicious on the eve, or more correctly the morn of affluence, to deposit an unfinished work of art with a mercenary relation. Hang it, Jane! would you really have me pawn Mrs. Woffington to-day?"

"James," said Jane steadily, "the manager may disappoint you, we have often been disappointed; so take the picture with you. They will give you ten shillings on it."

Triplet was of those who see things roseate, Mrs. Triplet lurid.

"Madam," said the poet, "for the first time in our conjugal career, your commands deviate so entirely from reason, that I respectfully withdraw that implicit obedience which has hitherto constituted my principal reputation. I'm hanged if I do it, Jane!"

"Dear James, to oblige me!"

"That alters the case; you confess it is unreasonable?"

"Oh yes! it is only to oblige me."

"Enough!" said Triplet, whose tongue was often a flail that fell on friend, foe, and self indiscriminately. "Allow it to be unreasonable, and I do it as a matter of course—to please you, Jane."

Accordingly the good soul wrapped it in green baize; but to relieve his mind he was obliged to get behind his wife, and shrug his shoulders to Lysimachus and the eldest girl, as who should say *voila bien une femme votre mère à vous!*

At last he was off, in high spirits. He reached Covent Garden at half-past ten, and there the poor fellow was sucked into a narrative whirlpool.

We must, however, leave him for a few minutes.

CHAPTER V

Sir Charles Pomander was detained in the country much longer than he expected.

He was rewarded by a little adventure. As he cantered up to London with two servants and a post-boy, all riding on horses ordered in relays beforehand, he came up with an antediluvian coach, stuck fast by the roadside. Looking into the window, with the humane design of quizzing the elders who should be there, he saw a young lady of surpassing beauty. This altered the case; Sir Charles instantly drew bridle and offered his services.

The lady thanked him, and being an innocent country lady, she opened those sluices, her eyes, and two tears gently trickled down, while she told him how eager she was to reach London, and how mortified at this delay.

The good Sir Charles was touched. He leaped his horse over a hedge, galloped to a farm-house in sight, and returned with ropes and rustics. These and Sir Charles's horses soon drew the coach out of some stiffish clay.

The lady thanked him, and thanked him, and thanked him, with heightening colour and beaming eyes, and he rode away like a hero.

Before he had gone five miles he became thoughtful and self-dissatisfied, finally his remorse came to a head; he called to him the keenest of his servants, Hunsdon, and ordered him to ride back past the carriage, then follow and put up at the same inn, to learn who the lady was, and whither going; and this knowledge gained, to ride into town full speed, and tell his master all about it. Sir Charles then resumed his complacency, and cantered into London that same evening.

Arrived there, he set himself in earnest to cut out his friend with Mrs. Woffington. He had already caused his correspondence with that lady to grow warm and more tender by degrees. Keeping a copy of his last, he always knew where he was. Cupid's barometer rose by rule; and so he arrived by just gradations at an artful climax, and made her in terms of chivalrous affection, an offer of a house, &c., three hundred a-year, &c., not forgetting his heart, &c. He knew that the ladies of the stage have an ear for flattery, and an eye to the main chance.

The good Sir Charles felt sure that however she might flirt with Vane or others, she would not forego a position for any disinterested *penchant*. Still, as he was a close player, he determined to throw a little cold water on that flame. His plan, like everything truly scientific, was simple.

"I'll run her down to him, and ridicule him to her," resolved this faithful friend and lover dear.

He began with Vane. He found him just leaving his own house. After the usual compliments, some such dialogue as this took place between Telemachus and pseudo Mentor:

"I trust you are not really in the power of this actress?"

"You are the slave of a word," replied Vane. "Would you confound black and white because both are colours? She is like that sisterhood in nothing but a name. Even on the stage they have nothing in common. They are puppets—all attitude and trick: she is all ease, grace, and nature."

"Nature!" cried Pomander. "*Laissez-moi tranquille.* They have artifice—nature's libel. She has art—nature's counterfeit."

"Her voice is truth told by music," cried the poetical lover; "theirs are jingling instruments of falsehood."

"They are all instruments," said the satirist; "she is rather the best tuned and played."

"Her face speaks in every lineament; theirs are rouged and wrinkled masks."

"Her mask is the best made, mounted and moved; that is all."

"She is a fountain of true feeling."

"No; a pipe that conveys it without spilling or holding a drop."

"She is an angel of talent, sir."

"She's a devil of deception."

"She is a divinity to worship."

"She's a woman to fight shy of. There is not a woman in London better known," continued Sir Charles. "She is a fair actress on the boards, and a great actress off them; but I can tell you how to add a new charm to her."

"Heaven can only do that," said Vane hastily.

"Yes, you can. Make her blush. Ask her for the list of your predecessors."

Vane winced visibly. He quickened his step, as if to get rid of this gadfly.

"I spoke to Mr. Quin," said he at last; "and he, who has no prejudice, paid her character the highest compliment."

"You have paid it the highest it admits," was the reply. "You have let it deceive you." Sir Charles continued in a more solemn tone: "Pray be warned. Why is it every man of intellect loves an actress once in his life, and no man of sense ever did it twice?"

This last hit, coming after the carte and tierce we have described, brought an expression of pain to Mr. Vane's face. He said abruptly: "Excuse me, I desire to be alone for half-an-hour."

Machiavel bowed; and instead of taking offence, said, in a tone full of feeling: "Ah! I give you pain! But you are right; think it calmly over awhile, and you will see I advise you well."

He then made for the theatre, and the weakish personage he had been playing upon walked down to the river, almost ran, in fact. He wanted to be out of sight.

He got behind some houses, and then his face seemed literally to break loose from confinement; so anxious, sad, fearful and bitter were the expressions that coursed each other over that handsome countenance.

What is the meaning of these hot and cold fits? It is not Sir Charles who has the power to shake Mr. Vane so without some help from within. *There is something wrong about this man!*

CHAPTER VI

MACHIAVEL entered the green-room, intending to wait for Mrs. Woffington, and carry out the second part of his plan.

He knew that weak minds cannot make head against ridicule, and with this pick-axe he proposed to clear the way, before he came to grave, sensible, business love with the lady. Machiavel was a man of talent. If he has been a silent personage hitherto, it is merely because it was not his cue to talk, but listen: otherwise, he was rather a master of the art of speech. He could be insinuating, eloquent, sensible, or satirical, at will. This personage sat in the green-room. In one hand was his diamond snuff-box, in the other a richly laced handkerchief; his clouded cane reposed by his side.

There was an air of success about this personage. The gentle reader, however conceited a dog, could not see how he was to defeat Sir Charles: who was tall, stout, handsome, rich, witty, self-sufficient, cool, majestic, courageous, and in whom were united the advantages of a hard head, a tough stomach, and no heart at all.

This great creature sat expecting Mrs. Woffington, like Olympian Jove awaiting Juno. But he was mortal after all; for suddenly the serenity of that adamantine countenance was disturbed; his eye dilated; his grace and dignity were shaken. He huddled his handkerchief into one pocket, his snuff-box into another, and forgot his cane. He ran to the door in unaffected terror.

Where are all his fine airs before a real danger? Love, intrigue, diplomacy, were all driven from his mind; for he beheld that approaching, which is the greatest peril and disaster known to social man. He saw a bore coming into the room!

In a wild thirst for novelty, Pomander had once penetrated to Goodman's Fields Theatre; there he had unguardedly put a question to a carpenter behind the scene; a seedy-black poet instantly pushed the carpenter away (down a trap, it is thought), and answered it in seven pages, and in continuation was so vaguely communicative, that he drove Sir Charles back into the far west.

Sir Charles knew him again in a moment, and at sight of

him bolted. They met at the door. "Ah! Mr. Triplet!" said the fugitive, "enchanted—to wish you good morning!" and he plunged into the hiding-places of the theatre.

"That is a very polite gentleman!" thought Triplet. He was followed by the call-boy, to whom he was explaining that his avocations, though numerous, would not prevent his paying Mr. Rich the compliment of waiting all day in his green-room, sooner than go without an answer to three important propositions, in which the town and the arts were concerned.

"What is your name?" said the boy of business to the man of words.

"Mr. Triplet," said Triplet.

"Triplet? There is something for you in the hall," said the urchin, and went off to fetch it.

"I knew it," said Triplet to himself; "they are accepted. There's a note in the hall to fix the reading." He then derided his own absurdity in having ever for a moment desponded. "Master of three arts, by each of which men grow fat, how was it possible he should starve all his days!"

He enjoyed a natural vanity for a few moments, and then came more generous feelings. What sparkling eyes there would be in Lambeth to-day! The butcher, at sight of Mr. Rich's handwriting, would give him credit. Jane should have a new gown.

But when his tragedies were played, and he paid!—El Dorado!—His children should be the neatest in the street. Lysimachus and Roxalana should learn the English language, cost what it might; sausages should be diurnal; and he himself would not be puffed up, fat, lazy. No! he would work all the harder, be affable as ever, and above all, never swamp the father, husband, and honest man, in the poet and the blackguard of sentiment.

Next his reflections took a business turn.

"These tragedies—the scenery? Oh! I shall have to paint it myself. The heroes? Well, they have nobody who will play them as I should. (This was true!) It will be hard work, all this; but then I shall be paid for it. I cannot go on this way: I must and will be paid separately for my branches."

Just as he came to this resolution, the boy returned with a brown-paper parcel, addressed to Mr. James Triplet. Triplet weighed it in his hand; it was heavy. "How is this?" cried he. "Oh! I see," said he, "these are the tragedies. He

sends them to me for some trifling alterations: managers always do." Triplet then determined to adopt these alterations, if judicious; for, argued he sensibly enough: "Managers are practical men: and we, in the heat of composition sometimes (*sic?*) say more than is necessary, and become tedious."

With that he opened the parcel, and looked for Mr. Rich's communication; it was not in sight. He had to look between the leaves of the manuscripts for it; it was not there. He shook them; it did not fall out. He shook them as a dog shakes a rabbit; nothing!

The tragedies were returned without a word. It took him some time to realise the full weight of the blow; but at last he saw that the manager of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, declined to take a tragedy by Triplet into consideration or bare examination.

He turned dizzy for a moment. Something between a sigh and a cry escaped him, and he sank upon a covered bench that ran along the wall. His poor tragedies fell here and there upon the ground, and his head went down upon his hands, which rested on Mrs. Woffington's picture. His anguish was so sharp, it choked his breath; when he recovered it, his eye bent down upon the picture. "Ah, Jane," he groaned, "you know this villainous world better than I!" He placed the picture gently on the seat (that picture must now be turned into bread), and slowly stooped for his tragedies; they had fallen hither and thither; he had to crawl about for them; he was an emblem of all the humiliations letters endure.

As he went after them on all-fours, more than one tear pattered on the dusty floor. Poor fellow! he was Triplet, and could not have died without tinging the death-rattle with some absurdity; but after all, he was a father driven to despair; a castle-builder, with his work rudely scattered; an artist, brutally crushed and insulted by a greater dunce than himself.

Faint, sick, and dark, he sat a moment on the seat before he could find strength to go home and destroy all the hopes he had raised.

Whilst Triplet sat collapsed on the bench, fate sent into the room all in one moment, as if to insult his sorrow, a creature that seemed the goddess of gaiety, impervious to a care. She swept in with a bold free step, for she was rehearsing a man's part, and thundered without rant, but with a spirit

and fire, and pace, beyond the conception of our poor tame actresses of 1852, these lines—

> "Now, by the joys
> Which my soul still has uncontrolled pursued,
> I would not turn aside from my least pleasure,
> Though all thy force were armed to bar my way;
> But, like the birds, great Nature's happy commoners,
> Rifle the sweets——"

"I beg—your par—don, sir!" holding the book on a level with her eye, she had nearly run over. "Two poets instead of one."

"Nay, madam," said Triplet, admiring, though sad, wretched, but polite, "pray continue. Happy the hearer, and still happier the author of verses so spoken. Ah!"

"Yes," replied the lady, "if you could persuade authors what we do for them, when we coax good music to grow on barren words. Are you an author, sir?" added she slily.

"In a small way, madam. I have here three trifles—tragedies."

Mrs. Woffington looked askant at them like a shy mare.

"Ah, madam!" said Triplet, in one of his insane fits, "if I might but submit them to such a judgment as yours?"

He laid his hand on them. It was as when a strange dog sees us go to take up a stone.

The actress recoiled.

"I am no judge of such things," cried she hastily.

Triplet bit his lip. He could have killed her. It was provoking, people would rather be hung than read a manuscript. Yet what hopeless trash they will read in crowds, which was manuscript a day ago. *Les imbéciles!*

"No more is the manager of this theatre a judge of such things," cried the outraged quill-driver bitterly.

"What! has he accepted them?" said needle-tongue.

"No, madam; he has had them six months, and see, madam, he has returned them me without a word."

Triplet's lip trembled.

"Patience, my good sir," was the merry reply. "Tragic authors should possess that, for they teach it to their audiences. Managers, sir, are like Eastern monarchs, inaccessible but to slaves and sultanas. Do you know I called upon Mr. Rich fifteen times before I could see him?"

"You, madam? Impossible!"

"Oh, it was years ago, and he has paid a hundred pounds for each of those little visits. Well, now, let me see, fifteen times; you must write twelve more tragedies, and then he will read *one;* and when he has read it, he will favour you with his judgment upon it; and when you have got that, you will have what all the world knows is not worth a farthing. He! he! he!

"'And like the birds, gay Nature's happy commoners,
Rifle the sweets'—mum—mum—mum."

Her high spirits made Triplet sadder. To think that one word from this laughing lady would secure his work a hearing, and that he dared not ask her. She was up in the world, he was down. She was great, he was nobody. He felt a sort of chill at this woman—all brains and no heart. He took his picture and his plays under his arms and crept sorrowfully away.

The actress's eye fell on him as he went off like a fifth act. His Don Quixote face struck her. She had seen it before.

"Sir," said she.

"Madam," said Triplet, at the door.

"We have met before. There, don't speak, I'll tell you who you are. Yours is a face that has been good to me, and I never forget them."

"Me, madam!" said Triplet, taken aback. "I trust I know what is due to you better than to be good to you, madam," said he in his confused way.

"To be sure!" cried she, "it is Mr. Triplet, good Mr. Triplet!" And this vivacious dame, putting her book down, seized both Triplet's hands and shook them.

He shook hers warmly in return out of excess of timidity, and dropped tragedies, and kicked at them convulsively when they were down, for fear they should be in her way, and his mouth opened, and his eyes glared.

"Mr. Triplet," said the lady, "do you remember an Irish orange girl you used to give sixpence to at Goodman's Fields, and pat her on the head and give her good advice, like a good old soul as you were? She took the sixpence."

"Madam," said Trip, recovering a grain of pomp, "singular as it may appear, I remember the young person; she was very engaging. I trust no harm hath befallen her, for methought I discovered, in spite of her brogue, a beautiful nature in her.

"Go along wid your blarney," answered a rich brogue; "an is it the comanther ye'd be putting on poor little Peggy?"

"Oh! oh gracious!" gasped Triplet.

"Yes," was the reply; but into that "yes" she threw a whole sentence of meaning. "Fine cha-ney oranges!" chanted she, to put the matter beyond dispute.

"Am I really so honoured as to have patted you on that queen-like head?" and he glared at it.

"On the same head which now I wear," replied she pompously. "I kept it for the convaynience hintirely, only there's more in it. Well, Mr. Triplet, you see what time has done for me; now tell me whether he has been as kind to you: are you going to speak to me, Mr. Triplet?"

As a decayed hunter stands lean and disconsolate, head poked forward like a goose's, but if hounds sweep by his paddock in full cry, followed by horses who are what he was not, he does by reason of the good blood that is and will be in his heart, *dum spiritus hoss regit artus*, cock his ears, erect his tail, and trot fiery to his extremest hedge, and look over it, nostril distended, mane flowing, and neigh the hunt onward like a trumpet; so Triplet, who had manhood at bottom, instead of whining out his troubles in the ear of encouraging beauty, as a sneaking spirit would, perked up, and resolved to put the best face upon it all before so charming a creature of the other sex.

"Yes, madam," cried he, with the air of one who could have smacked his lips, "Providence has blessed me with an excellent wife and four charming children. My wife was Miss Chatterton: you remember her?"

"Yes! Where is she playing now?"

"Why, madam, her health is too weak for it."

"Oh!—You were scene-painter. Do you still paint scenes?"

"With the pen, madam, not the brush: as the wags said, I transferred the distemper from my canvas to my imagination." And Triplet laughed uproariously.

When he had done, Mrs. Woffington, who had joined the laugh, inquired quietly whether his pieces had met with success.

"Eminent—in the closet; the stage is to come!" and he smiled absurdly again.

The lady smiled back.

"In short," said Triplet, recapitulating, "being blessed with health, and more tastes in the arts than most, and a

cheerful spirit, I should be wrong, madam, to repine; and this day, in particular, is a happy one," added the rose colourist, "since the great Mrs. Woffington has deigned to remember me, and call me friend."

Such was Triplet's summary.

Mrs. Woffington drew out her memorandum-book, and took down her summary of the crafty Triplet's facts. So easy is it for us Triplets to draw the wool over the eyes of women and Woffingtons.

"Triplet, discharged from scene-painting, wife, no engagement; four children supported by his pen—that is to say, starving; lose no time!"

She closed her book; and smiled, and said—

"I wish these things were comedies instead of trash-edies, as the French call them; we would cut one in half, and slice away the finest passages, and then I would act in it: and you would see how the stage-door would fly open at sight of the author."

"Oh, Heaven!" said poor Trip, excited by this picture. "I'll go home, and write a comedy this moment."

"Stay!" said she; "you had better leave the tragedies with me."

"My dear madam! You will read them?"

"Ahem! I will make poor Rich read them."

"But, madam, he has rejected them."

"That is the first step. Reading them comes after, when it comes at all. What have you got in that green baize?"

"In this green baize?

"Well, in this green baize, then."

"Oh, madam! nothing—nothing! To tell the truth, it is an adventurous attempt from memory. I saw you play Silvia, madam; I was so charmed, that I came every night. I took your face home with me—forgive my presumption, madam—and I produced this faint adumbration, which I expose with diffidence."

So then he took the green baize off.

The colour rushed into her face; she was evidently gratified. Poor, silly Mrs. Triplet was doomed to be right about this portrait.

"I will give you a sitting," said she. "You will find painting dull faces a better trade than writing dull tragedies. Work for other people's vanity, not your own; that is the art of art. And now I want Mr. Triplet's address."

"On the fly-leaf of each work, madam," replied that florid

author, "and also at the foot of every page which contains a particularly brilliant passage, I have been careful to insert the address of James Triplet, painter, actor, and dramatist, and Mrs. Woffington's humble, devoted servant." He bowed ridiculously low, and moved towards the door; but something gushed across his heart, and he returned with long strides to her. "Madam!" cried he, with a jaunty manner, "you have inspired a son of Thespis with dreams of eloquence, you have tuned in a higher key a poet's lyre, you have tinged a painter's existence with brighter colours, and—and—" His mouth worked still, but no more artificial words would come. He sobbed out, "and God in heaven bless you, Mrs. Woffington!" and ran out of the room.

Mrs. Woffington looked after him with interest, for this confirmed her suspicions; but suddenly her expression changed, she wore a look we have not yet seen upon her—it was a half-cunning, half-spiteful look; it was suppressed in a moment, she gave herself to her book, and presently Sir Charles Pomander sauntered into the room.

"Ah! what, Mrs. Woffington here?" said the diplomate.

"Sir Charles Pomander, I declare!" said the actress.

"I have just parted with an admirer of yours."

"I wish I could part with them all," was the reply.

"A pastoral youth, who means to win La Woffington by agricultural courtship—As shepherds woo in sylvan shades."

"With oaten pipe the rustic maids,"

quoth the Woffington, improvising.

The diplomate laughed, the actress laughed, and said laughingly: "*Tell me what he says word for word?*"

"It will only make you laugh."

"Well, and am I never to laugh, who provide so many laughs for you all?"

"*C'est juste.* You shall share the general merriment. Imagine a romantic soul, who adores you for *your simplicity!*"

"My simplicity! Am I so very simple?"

"No," said Sir Charles, monstrous drily. "He says you are out of place on the stage, and wants to take the star from its firmament, and put it in a cottage."

"I am not a star," replied the Woffington; "I am only a meteor. And what does the man think I am to do without this (here she imitated applause) from my dear public's thousand hands?"

"You are to have this (he mimicked a kiss), from a single mouth, instead."

"He is mad! Tell me what more he says. Oh! don't stop to invent; I should detect you; and you would only spoil this man."

He laughed conceitedly. "I should spoil him! Well then, he proposes to be your friend rather than your lover, and keep you from being talked of, he! he! instead of adding to your *éclat*."

"And if he is your friend, why don't you tell him my real character, and send him into the country?"

She said this rapidly and with an appearance of earnest. The diplomatist fell into the trap.

"I do," said he; "but he snaps his fingers at me and common sense and the world. I really think there is only one way to get rid of him, and with him of every annoyance."

"Ah! that would be nice."

"Delicious! I had the honour, madam, of laying certain proposals at your feet."

"Oh! yes—your letter, Sir Charles. I have only just had time to run my eye down it. Let us examine it together."

She took out the letter with a wonderful appearance of interest, and the diplomate allowed himself to fall into the absurd position to which she invited him. They put their two heads together over the letter.

"'A coach, a country-house, pin-money'—and I'm so tired of houses and coaches and pins. Oh yes, here's something; what is this you offer me, up in this corner?"

Sir Charles inspected the place carefully, and announced that it was "his heart."

"And he can't even write it!" said she. "That word is 'earth.' Ah! well, you know best. There is your letter, Sir Charles."

She curtsied, returned him the letter, and resumed her study of Lothario.

"Favour me with your answer, madam," said her suitor.

"You have it," was the reply.

"Madam, I don't understand your answer," said Sir Charles stiffly.

"I can't find you answers and understandings too," was the lady-like reply. "You must beat my answer into your understanding whilst I beat this man's verse into mine.

"'And like the birds, &c.'"

Pomander recovered himself a little; he laughed with quiet insolence. "Tell me," said he, "do you really refuse?"

"My good soul," said Mrs. Woffington, "why this surprise? Are you so ignorant of the stage and the world, as not to know that I refuse such offers as yours every week of my life?"

"I know better," was the cool reply. She left it unnoticed.

"I have so many of these," continued she, "that I have begun to forget they are insults."

At this word the button broke off Sir Charles's foil.

"Insults, madam! They are the highest compliments you have left it in our power to pay you."

The other took the button off her foil.

"Indeed," cried she, with well-feigned surprise.

"Oh! I understand. To be your mistress, could be but a temporary disgrace; to be your wife, would be a lasting discredit," she continued. "And now, sir, having played your rival's game, and showed me your whole hand (a light broke in upon our diplomate), do something to recover the reputation of a man of the world. A gentleman is somewhere about in whom you have interested me by your lame satire; pray tell him I am in the green-room, with no better companion than his bad poet."

Sir Charles clenched his teeth.

"I accept the delicate commission," replied he, "that you may see how easily the man of the world drops what the rustic is eager to pick up."

"That is better," said the actress, with a provoking appearance of good humour. "You have a woman's tongue, if not her wit; but, my good soul," added she, with cool *hauteur*, "remember you have something to do of more importance than anything you can say."

"I accept your courteous dismissal, madam," said Pomander, grinding his teeth. "I will send a carpenter for your swain; and I leave you."

He bowed to the ground.

"Thanks for the double favour, good Sir Charles."

She curtsied to the floor.

Feminine vengeance! He had come between her and her love. All very clever, Mrs. Actress; but was it wise?

"I am revenged," thought Mrs. Woffington, with a little feminine smirk.

"I will be revenged," vowed Pomander, clenching his teeth.

CHAPTER VII

COMPARE a November day with a May day. They are not more unlike than a beautiful woman in company with a man she is indifferent to or averse, and the same woman with the man of her heart by her side.

At sight of Mr. Vane, all her coldness and *nonchalance* gave way to a gentle complacency; and when she spoke to him, her voice, so clear and cutting in the late *assaut d'armes*, sank of its own accord into the most tender, delicious tone imaginable.

Mr. Vane and she made love. He pleased her, and she desired to please him. My reader knows her wit, her *finesse*, her fluency; but he cannot conceive how god-like was her way of making love. I can put a few of the corpses of her words upon paper, but where are the heavenly tones—now calm and convincing, now soft and melancholy, now thrilling with tenderness, now glowing with the fiery eloquence of passion? She told him that she knew the map of his face; that, for some days past, he had been subject to an influence adverse to her. She begged him, calmly, for his own sake, to distrust false friends, and judge her by his own heart, eyes, and judgment. He promised her he would.

"And I do trust you, in spite of them all," said he; "for your face is the shrine of sincerity and candour. I alone know you."

Then she prayed him to observe the heartlessness of his sex, and to say whether she had done ill to hide the riches of her heart from the cold and shallow, and to keep them all for one honest man, "who will be my friend, I hope," said she, "as well as my lover."

"Ah!" said Vane, "that is my ambition."

"We actresses," said she, "make good the old proverb, 'Many lovers, but few friends.' And, oh! 'tis we who need a friend. Will you be mine?"

Whilst he lived, he would.

In turn, he begged her to be generous, and tell him the way for him, Ernest Vane, inferior in wit and address to many of her admirers, to win her heart from them all.

This singular woman's answer is, I think, worth attention.

"Never act in my presence; never try to be eloquent or

clever, never force a sentiment, or turn a phrase. Remember, I am the goddess of tricks. Do not descend to competition with me and the Pomanders of the world. At all littlenesses, you will ever be awkward in my eyes. And I am a woman. I must have a superior to love—lie open to my eye. Light itself is not more beautiful than the upright man, whose bosom is open to the day. Oh yes! fear not you will be my superior, dear; for in me honesty has to struggle against the habits of my art and life. Be simple and sincere, and I shall love you, and bless the hour you shone upon my cold, artificial life. Ah, Ernest!" said she, fixing on his eyes her own, the fire of which melted into tenderness as she spoke, "be my friend. Come between me and the temptations of an unprotected life—the recklessness of a vacant heart."

He threw himself at her feet. He called her an angel, He told her he was unworthy of her, but that he would try and deserve her. Then he hesitated, and trembling, he said—

"I will be frank and loyal. Had I not better tell you everything? You will not hate me for a confession I make myself?"

"I shall like you better—oh! so much better!"

"Then I will own to you ——"

"Oh! do not tell me you have ever loved before me! I could not bear to hear it!" cried this inconsistent personage.

The other weak creature needed no more.

"I see plainly I never loved but you," said he.

"Let me hear that only!" cried she; "I am jealous even of the past. Say you never loved but me, never mind whether it is true. My child, you do not even yet know love. Ernest, shall I make you love—as none of your sex ever loved—with heart, and brain, and breath, and life, and soul?"

With these rapturous words, she poured the soul of love into his eyes; he forgot everything in the world but her; he dissolved in present happiness, and vowed himself hers for ever: and she, for her part, bade him but retain her esteem, and no woman ever went farther in love than she would. She was a true epicure: she had learned that passion, vulgar in itself, is god-like when based upon esteem.

This tender scene was interrupted by the call-boy, who brought Mrs. Woffington a note from the manager, informing her there would be no rehearsal. This left her at liberty, and she proceeded to take a somewhat abrupt leave of Mr. Vane. He was endeavouring to persuade her to let him be her companion until dinner-time (she was to be his guest), when Pomander entered the room.

Mrs. Woffington, however, was not to be persuaded; she excused herself on the score of a duty which she said she had to perform, and whispering as she passed Pomander, "Keep your own counsel," she went out rather precipitately.

Vane looked slightly disappointed.

Sir Charles, who had returned to see whether (as he fully expected) she had told Vane everything—and who, at that moment, perhaps, would not have been sorry had Mrs. Woffington's lover called him to serious account—finding it was not her intention to make mischief, and not choosing to publish his own defeat, dropped quietly into his old line, and determined to keep the lovers in sight, and play for revenge. He smiled and said: "My good sir, nobody can hope to monopolise Mrs. Woffington: she has others to do justice to besides you."

To his surprise, Mr. Vane turned instantly round upon him and looking him haughtily in the face, said: "Sir Charles Pomander, the settled malignity with which you pursue that lady is unmanly and offensive to me, who love her. Let our acquaintance cease here, if you please, or let her be sacred from your venomous tongue."

Sir Charles bowed stiffly, and replied, that it was only due to himself to withdraw a protection so little appreciated.

The two friends were in the very act of separating for ever, when who should run in but Pompey, the renegade. He darted up to Sir Charles, and said: "Massa Pomannah she in a coach, going to 10 Hercules Buildings. I'm in a hurry, Massa Pomannah."

"Where?" cried Pomander. "Say that again."

"10 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. Me in a hurry, Massa Pomannah."

"Faithful child, there's a guinea for thee. Fly!"

The slave flew, and taking a short cut, caught and fastened on to the slow vehicle in the Strand.

"It is a house of rendezvous," said Sir Charles, half to himself, half to Mr. Vane. He repeated, in triumph: "It is a house of rendezvous." He then, recovering his *sang froid*, and treating it all as a matter of course, explained that at 10 Hercules Buildings was a fashionable shop, with entrances from two streets; that the best Indian scarfs and shawls were sold there, and that ladies kept their carriages waiting an immense time in the principal street, whilst they were supposed to be in the shop, or the showroom. He then went on to say that he had only this morning heard, that the intimacy between Mrs.

Woffington and a Colonel Murthwaite, although publicly broken off for prudential reasons, was still clandestinely carried on. She had, doubtless, slipped away to meet the Colonel.

Mr. Vane turned pale.

"No! I will not suspect. I will not dog her like a blood-hound," cried he.

"I will!" said Pomander.

"You! By what right?"

"The right of curiosity. I will know whether it is you who are imposed on; or whether you are right, and all the world is deceived in this woman."

He ran out; but for all his speed, when he got into the street, there was the jealous lover at his elbow. They darted with all speed into the Strand; got a coach. Sir Charles, on the box, gave Jehu a guinea, and took the reins—and by a Niagara of whip-cord they attained Lambeth; and, at length, to his delight, Pomander saw another coach before him with a gold-laced black slave behind it. The coach stopped; and the slave came to the door. The shop in question was a few hundred yards distant. The adroit Sir Charles not only stopped, but turned his coach, and let the horses crawl back towards London; he also flogged the side panels to draw the attention of Mr. Vane. That gentleman looked through the little circular window at the back of the vehicle, and saw a lady paying the coachman. There was no mistaking her figure. This lady, then, followed at a distance by her slave, walked on towards Hercules Buildings; and it was his miserable fate to see her look uneasily round, and at last glide in at a side door, close to the silkmercer's shop.

The carriage stopped. Sir Charles came himself to the door.

"Now, Vane," said he; "before I consent to go any farther in this business, you must promise me to be cool and reasonable. I abhor absurdity; and there must be no swords drawn for this little hypocrite."

"I submit to no dictation," said Vane, white as a sheet.

"You have benefited so far by my knowledge," said the other politely; "let me, who am self-possessed, claim some influence with you."

"Forgive me!" said poor Vane. "My ang—my sorrow that such an angel should be a monster of deceit." He could say no more.

They walked to the shop.

"How she peeped, this way, and that," said Pomander, "sly little Woffy!"

"No! on second thoughts," said he, "it is the other street we must reconnoitre; and if we don't see her there, we will enter the shop, and by dint of this purse, we shall soon untie the knot of the Woffington riddle."

Vane leaned heavily on his tormentor.

"I am faint," said he.

"Lean on me, my dear friend," said Sir Charles. "Your weakness will leave you in the next street."

In the next street they discovered—nothing. In the shop, they found—no Mrs. Woffington. They returned to the principal street. Vane began to hope there was no positive evidence. Suddenly three stories up a fiddle was heard. Pomander took no notice, but Vane turned red; this put Sir Charles upon the scent.

"Stay!" said he. "Is not that an Irish tune?"

Vane groaned. He covered his face with his hands, and hissed out—

"It is her favourite tune."

"Aha!" said Pomander. "Follow me!"

They crept up the stairs, Pomander in advance; they heard the signs of an Irish orgie—a rattling jig played, and danced with the inspiriting interjections of that frolicsome nation. These sounds ceased after awhile, and Pomander laid his hand on his friend's shoulder:

"I prepare you," said he, "for what you are sure to see. This woman was an Irish bricklayer's daughter, and 'what is bred in the bone never comes out of the flesh;' you will find her sitting on some Irishman's knee, whose limbs are ever so much stouter than yours. You are the man of her head, and this is the man of her heart. These things would be monstrous, if they were not common; incredible, if we did not see them every day. But this poor fellow, whom probably she deceives as well as you, is not to be sacrificed like a dog to your unjust wrath; he is as superior to her, as you are to him."

"I will commit no violence," said Vane. "I still hope she is innocent."

Pomander smiled, and said he hoped so too.

"And if she is what you think, I will but show her she is known, and blaming myself as much as her—oh yes! more than her!—I will go down this night to Shropshire, and never speak word to her again in this world or the next."

"Good," said Sir Charles.

"'Le bruit est pour le fat, la plainte est pour le sot,
L'honnête homme trompé s'éloigne et ne dit mot.'

Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me."

Turning the handle gently, he opened the door like lightning, and was in the room. Vane's head peered over his shoulder. She was actually there!

For once in her life, the cautious artful woman was taken by surprise. She gave a little scream, and turned as red as fire. But Sir Charles surprised somebody else even more than he did poor Mrs. Woffington.

It would be impertinent to tantalise my reader, but I flatter myself this history is not written with power enough to do that, and I may venture to leave him to guess whom Sir Charles Pomander surprised more than he did the actress, while I go back for the lagging sheep.

CHAPTER VIII

James Triplet, water in his eye, but fire in his heart, went home on wings. Arrived there, he anticipated curiosity by informing all hands he should answer no questions. Only in the intervals of a work, which was to take the family out of all its troubles, he should gradually unfold a tale, verging on the marvellous—a tale whose only fault was, that fiction, by which alone the family could hope to be great, paled beside it. He then seized some sheets of paper, fished out some old dramatic sketches, and a list of *dramatis personæ*, prepared years ago, and plunged into a comedy. As he wrote, true to his promise, he painted, Triplet-wise, that story which we have coldly related, and made it appear, to all but Mrs. Triplet, that he was under the tutela, or express protection of Mrs. Woffington, who would push his fortunes until the only difficulty would be to keep arrogance out of the family heart.

Mrs. Triplet groaned aloud. "You have brought the picture home, I see," said she.

"Of course I have. She is going to give me a sitting."

"At what hour, of what day?" said Mrs. Triplet, with a world of meaning.

"She did not say," replied Triplet, avoiding his wife's eye.

"I know she did not," was the answer. "I would rather you had brought me the ten shillings than this fine story," said she.

"Wife!" said Triplet, "don't put me into a frame of mind in which successful comedies are not written." He scribbled away; but his wife's despondency told upon the man of disappointments. Then he stuck fast; then he became fidgety.

"Do keep those children quiet!" said the father.

"Hush, my dears," said the mother; "let your father write. Comedy seems to give you more trouble than tragedy, James," added she soothingly.

"Yes," was his answer. "Sorrow comes, somehow, more natural to me; but for all that I have got a bright thought, Mrs. Triplet. Listen all of you. You see, Jane, they are all at a sumptuous banquet, all the *dramatis personæ*, except the poet."

Triplet went on writing, and reading his work out: "music, sparkling wine, massive plate, rosewater in the hand-glasses, soup, fish—shall I have three sorts of fish? I will; they are cheap in this market. Ah! Fortune, you wretch, here at least I am your master, and I'll make you know it—venison," wrote Triplet with a malicious grin, "game, pickles and provocatives in the centre of the table, then up jumps one of the guests, and says he——

"Oh dear, I am so hungry."

This was not from the comedy, but from one of the boys.

"And so am I," cried a girl.

"That is an absurd remark, Lysimachus," said Triplet, with a suspicious calmness.

"How can a boy be hungry three hours after breakfast?"

"But, father, there was no breakfast for breakfast."

"Now I ask you, Mrs. Triplet," appealed the author, "how am I to write comic scenes if you let Lysimachus and Roxalana here, put the heavy business in every five minutes?"

"Forgive them; the poor things are hungry."

"Then let them be hungry in another room," said the irritated scribe. "They shan't cling round my pen, and paralyse it just when it is going to make all our fortunes; but you women," snapped Triplet the Just, "have no consideration for people's feelings. Send them all to bed—every man jack of them!"

Finding the conversation taking this turn, the brats raised an unanimous howl.

Triplet darted a fierce glance at them. "Hungry, hungry," cried he; "is that a proper expression to use before a father who is sitting down here all gaiety (scratching wildly with his pen) and hilarity (scratch) to write a com—com—" he choked a moment; then in a very different voice, all sadness and tenderness, he said: "Where's the youngest—where's Lucy? As if I didn't know you are hungry."

Lucy came to him directly. He took her on his knee, pressed her gently to his side, and wrote silently. The others were still.

"Father," said Lucy, aged five, the germ of a woman, "I am not tho very hungry."

"And I am not hungry at all," said Bluff Lysimachus, taking his sister's cue; then going upon his own tact he added, "I had a great piece of bread and butter yesterday!"

"Wife, they will drive me mad!" and he dashed at the paper.

The second boy explained to his mother, *sotto voce*: "Mother, he *made* us hungry out of his book."

"It is a beautiful book," said Lucy. "Is it a cookery book?"

Triplet roared, "Do you hear that?" inquired he, all trace of ill-humour gone. "Wife," he resumed, after a gallant scribble, "I took that sermon I wrote."

"And beautiful it was, James. I'm sure it quite cheered me up with thinking, that we shall all be dead before so very long."

"Well, the reverend gentleman would not have it. He said it was too hard upon sin. 'You run at the devil like a mad bull,' said he. 'Sell it in Lambeth, sir; *here* calmness and decency are before everything,' says he. 'My congregation expect to go to heaven down hill. Perhaps the chaplain of Newgate might give you a crown for it,' said he," and Triplet dashed viciously at the paper. "Ah!" sighed he, "if my friend Mrs. Woffington would but drop these stupid comedies and take to tragedy, this house would soon be all smiles."

"Oh, James!" replied Mrs. Triplet, almost peevishly, "how can you expect anything but fine words from that woman? You won't believe what all the world says. You will trust to your own good heart."

"I haven't a good heart," said the poor, honest fellow. "I spoke like a brute to you just now."

"Never mind, James," said the woman; "I wonder how you put up with me at all—a sick, useless creature. I often wish to die, for your sake. I know you would do better. I am such a weight round your neck."

The man made no answer, but he put Lucy gently down,

and went to the woman, and took her forehead to his bosom, and held it there; and after a while, returned with silent energy to his comedy.

"Play us a tune on the fiddle, father."

"Ay, do, husband. That helps you often in your writing."

Lysimachus brought him the fiddle, and Triplet essayed a merry tune; but it came out so doleful, that he shook his head, and laid the instrument down. Music must be in the heart, or it will come out of the fingers—notes, not music.

"No," said he; "let us be serious and finish this comedy slap off. Perhaps it hitches because I forgot to invoke the comic muse. She must be a black-hearted jade, if she doesn't come with merry notions to a poor devil, starving in the midst of his hungry little ones."

"We are past help from heathen goddesses," said the woman. "We must pray to Heaven to look down upon us and our children."

The man looked up with a very bad expression on his countenance.

"You forget," said he sullenly, "our street is very narrow, and the opposite houses are very high."

"James!"

"How can Heaven be expected to see what honest folk endure in so dark a hole as this?" cried the man fiercely.

"James," said the woman, with fear and sorrow, "what words are these?"

The man rose, and flung his pen upon the floor.

"Have we given honesty a fair trial—yes or no?"

"No!" said the woman, without a moment's hesitation; "not till we die, as we have lived. Heaven is higher than the sky; children," said she, lest perchance her husband's words should have harmed their young souls—"the sky is above the earth, and Heaven is higher than the sky; and Heaven is just."

"I suppose it is so," said the man, a little cowed by her. "Everybody says so. I think so, at bottom, myself; but I can't see it. I want to see it, but I can't!" cried he fiercely, "Have my children offended Heaven? They will starve—they will die! If I was Heaven, I'd be just, and send an angel to take these children's part. They cried to me for bread—I had no bread; so I gave them hard words. The moment I had done that, I knew it was all over. God knows, it took a long while to break my heart; but it is broken at last—quite, quite broken! broken! broken!"

And the poor thing laid his head upon the table, and sobbed, beyond all power of restraint. The children cried round him, scarce knowing why; and Mrs. Triplet could only say, "My poor husband!" and prayed and wept upon the couch where she lay.

It was at this juncture that a lady, who had knocked gently and unheard, opened the door, and with a light step, entered the apartment; but no sooner had she caught sight of Triplet's anguish, than saying hastily, "Stay, I forgot something," she made as hasty an exit.

This gave Triplet a moment to recover himself; and Mrs. Woffington, whose lynx-eye had comprehended all at a glance, and who had determined at once what line to take, came flying in again, saying—

"Wasn't somebody inquiring for an angel? Here I am. See, Mr. Triplet," and she showed him a note, which said, "Madam, you are an angel. From a perfect stranger," explained she; "so it must be true."

"Mrs. Woffington," said Mr. Triplet to his wife.

Mrs. Woffington planted herself in the middle of the floor, and with a comical glance, setting her arms akimbo, uttered a shrill whistle.

"Now you will see another angel—there are two sorts of them."

Pompey came in with a basket: she took it from him.

"Lucifer, avaunt!" cried she, in a terrible tone, that drove him to the wall; "and wait outside the door," added she conversationally.

"I heard you were ill, ma'am, and I have brought you some physic—black draughts from Burgundy;" and she smiled. And recovered from their first surprise, young and old began to thaw beneath that witching, irresistible smile. "Mrs. Triplet, I have come to give your husband a sitting; will you allow me to eat my little luncheon with you? I am so hungry." Then she clapped her hands, and in ran Pompey. She sent him for a pie she professed to have fallen in love with at the corner of the street.

"Mother," said Alcibiades, "will the lady give me a bit of her pie?"

"Hush! you rude boy!" cried the mother.

"She is not much of a lady if she does not," cried Mrs. Woffington. "Now, children, first let us look at—ahem—a comedy. Nineteen *dramatis personæ*. What do you say, children, shall we cut out seven, or nine? that is the question.

You can't bring your armies into our drawing-rooms, Mr. Dagger-and-bowl. Are you the Marlborough of comedy? Can you marshal battalions on a turkey carpet, and make gentle folks witty in platoons? What is this in the first act? A duel, and both wounded! You butcher!"

"They are not to die, ma'am!" cried Triplet deprecatingly; "upon my honour," said he solemnly, spreading his hands on his bosom.

"Do you think I'll trust their lives with you? No! Give me a pen: this is the way *we* run people through the body." Then she wrote ("Business." Araminta looks out of the garret window. Combatants drop their swords, put their hands to their hearts, and stagger off O. P. and P. S.) "Now, children, who helps me to lay the cloth?"

"I!"

"And I!" (The children run to the cupboard.)

Mrs. TRIPLET (half rising).—"Madam, I—can't think of allowing you."

Mrs. Woffington replied: "Sit down, madam, or I must use brute force. If you are ill, be ill—till I make you well. Twelve plates, quick! Twenty-four knives, quicker! Forty-eight forks, quickest! She met the children with the cloth and laid it; then she met them again and laid knives and forks, all at full gallop, which mightily excited the bairns. Pompey came in with the pie, Mrs. Woffington took it and set it before Triplet.

Mrs. WOFFINGTON.—"Your coat, Mr. Triplet, if you please."

Mr. TRIPLET.—"My coat, madam!"

Mrs. WOFFINGTON.—"Yes, off with it—there's a hole in it—and carve." Then she whipped to the other end of the table and stitched like wild-fire. "Be pleased to cast your eyes on that, Mrs. Triplet. Pass it to the lady, young gentleman. Fire away, Mr. Triplet, never mind us women. Woffington's housewife, ma'am, fearful to the eye, only it holds everything in the world, and there is a small space for everything else—to be returned by the bearer. Thank you, sir." (Stitches away like lightning at the coat.) "Eat away, children! now is your time, when once I begin, the pie will soon end; I do everything so quick."

ROXALANA.—"The lady sews quicker than you, mother."

WOFFINGTON.—"Bless the child, don't come so near my sword-arm; the needle will go into your eye, and out at the back of your head."

This nonsense made the children giggle.

"The needle will be lost—the child no more—enter undertaker—house turned topsy-turvy—father shows Woffington to the door—off she goes with a face as long and dismal as some people's comedies—no names—crying fine cha-ney oran-ges."

The children, all but Lucy, screeched with laughter.

Lucy said gravely—

"Mother, the lady is very funny."

"You will be as funny, when you are as well paid for it."

This just hit poor Trip's notion of humour, and he began to choke, with his mouth full of pie.

"James, take care," said Mrs. Triplet, sad and solemn.

James looked up.

"My wife is a good woman, madam," said he; "but deficient in an important particular."

"Oh, James!"

"Yes, my dear. I regret to say you have no sense of humour; nummore than a cat, Jane."

"What! because the poor thing can't laugh at your comedy?"

"No, ma'am; but she laughs at nothing."

"Try her with one of your tragedies, my lad?"

"I am sure, James," said the poor, good, lackadaisical woman, "if I don't laugh, it is not for want of the will. I used to be a very hearty laugher," whined she; "but I haven't laughed this two years."

"Oh, indeed!" said the Woffington. "Then the next two years you shall do nothing else."

"Ah, madam!" said Triplet. "That passes the art, even of the great comedian."

"Does it?" said the actress coolly.

Lucy.—"She is not a comedy lady. You don't ever cry, pretty lady?"

Woffington (ironically).—"Oh! of course not."

Lucy (confidentially).—"Comedy is crying. Father cried all the time he was writing his one."

Triplet turned red as fire.

"Hold your tongue," said he; "I was bursting with merriment. Wife, our children talk too much; they put their noses into everything, and criticise their own father."

"Unnatural offspring!" laughed the visitor.

"And when they take up a notion, Socrates couldn't convince them to the contrary. For instance, madam, all this morning they thought fit to assume that they were starving."

"So we were," said Lysimachus, "until the angel came; and the devil went for the pie."

"There—there—there! Now, you mark my words; we shall never get that idea out of their heads——"

"Until," said Mrs. Woffington, lumping a huge cut of pie into Roxalana's plate, "we put a very different idea into their stomachs." This, and the look she cast on Mrs. Triplet, fairly caught that good, though sombre personage. She giggled; put her hand to her face, and said: "I'm sure I ask your pardon, ma'am?"

It was no use; the comedian had determined they should all laugh, and they were made to laugh. Then she rose, and showed them how to drink healths *à la Française;* and keen were her little admirers to touch her glass with theirs. And the pure wine she had brought did Mrs. Triplet much good, too; though not so much as the music and sunshine of her face and voice. Then, when their stomachs were full of good food, and the soul of the grape tingled in their veins, and their souls glowed under her great magnetic power, she suddenly seized the fiddle, and showed them another of her enchantments. She put it on her knee, and played a tune that would have made gout, colic, and phthisick dance upon their last legs. She played to the eye as well as to the ear, with such a smart gesture of the bow, and such a radiance of face as she looked at them, that whether the music came out of her wooden shell, or her horsehair wand, or her bright self, seemed doubtful. They pranced on their chairs; they could not keep still. She jumped up; so did they. She gave a wild Irish horroo. She put the fiddle in Triplet's hand.

"'The wind that shakes the barley,' ye divil!" cried she.

Triplet went *hors de lui;* he played like Paganini, or an intoxicated demon. Woffington covered the buckle in gallant style; she danced, the children danced. Triplet fiddled and danced, and flung his limbs in wild dislocation; the wine-glasses danced; and last, Mrs. Triplet was observed to be bobbing about on her sofa, in a monstrous absurd way, droning out the tune, and playing her hands with mild enjoyment, all to herself. Woffington pointed out this pantomimic soliloquy to the two boys, with a glance full of fiery meaning. This was enough: with a fiendish yell, they fell upon her, and tore her, shrieking, off the sofa. And lo! when she was once launched, she danced up to her husband, and set to him with a meek deliberation, that was as funny as any part of the scene. So then the mover of all this slipped on one side, and let the stone of merriment roll—and roll it did; there was no swim-

ming, sprawling, or irrelevant frisking; their feet struck the ground for every note of the fiddle, pat as its echo, their faces shone, their hearts leaped, and their poor frozen natures came out, and warmed themselves at the glowing melody; a great sunbeam had come into their abode, and these human motes danced in it. The elder ones recovered their gravity first, they sat down breathless, and put their hands to their hearts; they looked at one another, and then at the goddess who had revived them. Their first feeling was wonder; were they the same who, ten minutes ago, were weeping together? Yes! ten minutes ago they were rayless, joyless, hopeless. Now, the sun was in their hearts, and sorrow and sighing were fled, as fogs disperse before the God of day. It was magical; could a mortal play upon the soul of man, woman, and child like this? Happy Woffington! and suppose this was more than half-acting, but such acting as Triplet never dreamed of; and to tell the honest simple truth, I, myself, should not have suspected it; but children are sharper than one would think, and Alcibiades Triplet told, in after years, that when they were all dancing except the lady, he caught sight of her face —and it was quite, quite grave, and even sad: but as often as she saw him look at her, she smiled at him so gaily—he couldn't believe it was the same face.

If it was art, glory be to such art so worthily applied! and honour to such creatures as this, that come like sunshine into poor men's houses, and tune drooping hearts to daylight and hope!

The wonder of these worthy people soon changed to grati tude. Mrs. Woffington stopped their mouths at once.

"No, no!" cried she; "if you really love me, no scenes: I hate them. Tell these brats to kiss me, and let me go. I must sit for my picture after dinner; it is a long way to Bloomsbury Square."

The children needed no bidding; they clustered round her, and poured out their innocent hearts as children only do.

"I shall pray for you after father and mother," said one.

"I shall pray for you after daily bread," said Lucy, "because we were *tho* hungry till you came!"

"My poor children!" cried Woffington, and hard to grown-up actors, as she called us, but sensitive to children, she fairly melted as she embraced them. It was at this precise juncture that the door was unceremoniously opened, and the two gentleman burst upon the scene!

My reader now guesses whom Sir Charles Pomander sur-

prised more than he did Mrs. Woffington. He could not for the life of him comprehend what she was doing, and what was her ulterior object. The *nil admirari* of the fine gentleman deserted him, and he gazed open-mouthed, like the veriest chaw-bacon.

The actress, unable to extricate herself in a moment from the children, stood there like Charity, in New College Chapel, whilst the mother kissed her hand, and the father quietly dropped tears, like some leaden water-god in the middle of a fountain.

Vane turned hot and cold by turns, with joy and shame. Pomander's genius came to the aid of their embarrassment.

"Follow my lead," whispered he. "What! Mrs. Woffington here!" cried he; then he advanced business-like to Triplet. "We are aware, sir, of your various talents, and are come to make a demand on them. I, sir, am the unfortunate possessor of frescoes; time has impaired their indelicacy, no man can restore it as you can."

"Augh! sir! sir!" said the gratified goose.

"My Cupid's bows are walking-sticks, and my Venus's noses are snubbed. You must set all that straight, on your own terms, Mr. Triplet."

"In a single morning all shall bloom again, sir! Whom would you wish them to resemble in feature? I have lately been praised for my skill in portraiture." (Glancing at Mrs. Woffington.)

"Oh!" said Pomander carelessly, "you need not go far for Venuses and Cupids, I suppose?"

"I see, sir: my wife and children. Thank you, sir; thank you."

Pomander stared; Mrs. Woffington laughed.

Now it was Vane's turn.

"Let me have a copy of verses from your pen. I shall have five pounds at your disposal for them."

"The world has found me out!" thought Triplet, blinded by his vanity. "The subject, sir?"

"No matter," said Vane: "no matter."

"Oh! of course, it does not matter to me," said Triplet, with some *hauteur*, and assuming poetic omnipotence. "Only, when one knows the subject, one can sometimes make the verses apply better."

"Write then, since you are so confident, upon Mrs. Woffington."

"Ah! that is a subject! They shall be ready in an hour!"

cried Trip, in whose imagination Parnassus was a raised counter. He had in a tea-cup some lines on Venus and Mars, which he could not but feel would fit Thalia and Crœsus, or Genius and Envy, equally well. "In one hour, sir," said Triplet, "the article shall be executed, and delivered at your house."

Mrs. Woffington called Vane to her, with an engaging smile. A month ago, he would have hoped she would not have penetrated him and Sir Charles; but he knew her better now. He came trembling.

"Look me in the face, Mr. Vane," said she gently, but firmly.

"I cannot!" said he. "How can I ever look you in the face again?"

"Ah! you disarm me! But I must strike you, or this will never end. Did I not promise that when you had earned my esteem, I would tell you—what no mortal knows—Ernest, my whole story? I delay the confession: it will cost me so many blushes—so many tears! And yet I hope, if you knew all, you would pity and forgive me. Meantime, did I ever tell you a falsehood?"

"Oh no!"

"Why doubt me then, when I tell you that I hold all your sex cheap, but you? Why suspect me of Heaven knows what, at the dictation of a heartless, brainless fop—on the word of a known liar, like the world?"

Black lightning flashed from her glorious eyes, as she administered this royal rebuke. Vane felt what a poor creature he was, and his face showed such burning shame and contrition, that he obtained his pardon without speaking.

"There," said she kindly, "do not let us torment one another. I forgive you. Let me make you happy, Ernest. Is that a great favour to ask? I can make you happier than your brightest dream of happiness, if you will let yourself be happy."

They rejoined the others; but Vane turned his back on Pomander, and would not look at him.

"Sir Charles," said Mrs. Woffington gaily; for she scorned to admit the fine gentleman to the rank of a permanent enemy, "you will be of our party, I trust, at dinner?"

"Why, no, madam; I fear I cannot give myself that pleasure to-day." Sir Charles did not choose to swell the triumph. "Mr. Vane, good day!" said he rather drily. "Mr. Triplet—madam—your most obedient!" and, self-possessed at top, but at bottom crestfallen, he bowed himself away.

Sir Charles, however, on descending the stair and gaining the street, caught sight of a horseman, riding uncertainly about, and making his horse curvet, to attract attention.

He soon recognised one of his own horses, and upon it the servant he had left behind to dog that poor innocent country lady. The servant sprang off his horse and touched his hat. He informed his master that he had kept with the carriage until ten o'clock this morning, when he had ridden away from it at Barnet, having duly pumped the servants as opportunity offered.

"Who is she?" cried Sir Charles.

"Wife of a Cheshire squire, Sir Charles," was the reply.

"His name? Whither goes she in town?"

"Her name is Mrs. Vane, Sir Charles. She is going to her husband."

"Curious!" cried Sir Charles. "I wish she had no husband. No! I wish she came from Shropshire," and he chuckled at the notion.

"If you please, Sir Charles," said the man, "is not Willoughby in Cheshire?"

"No," cried his master; "it is in Shropshire. What! eh! Five guineas for you if that lady comes from Willoughby in Shropshire."

"That is where she comes from then, Sir Charles, and she is going to Bloomsbury Square."

"How long have they been married?"

"Not more than twelve months, Sir Charles."

Pomander gave the man ten guineas instead of five on the spot.

Reader, it was too true! Mr. Vane — the good, the decent, the church-goer—Mr. Vane, whom Mrs. Woffington had selected to improve her morals—Mr. Vane was a married man!

CHAPTER IX

As soon as Pomander had drawn his breath and realised this discovery he darted upstairs, and with all the demure calmness he could assume, told Mr. Vane, whom he met descending, that he was happy to find his engagements permitted him to join the party in Bloomsbury Square. He then flung himself upon his servant's horse.

Like Iago, he saw the indistinct outline of a glorious and a most malicious plot; it lay crude in his head and heart at present; thus much he saw clearly, that if he could time Mrs. Vane's arrival so that she should pounce upon the Woffington at her husband's table, he might be present at and enjoy the public discomfiture of a man and woman who had wounded his vanity. Bidding his servant make the best of his way to Bloomsbury Square, Sir Charles galloped in that direction himself, intending first to inquire whether Mrs. Vane was arrived, and if not, to ride towards Islington and meet her. His plan was frustrated by an accident; galloping round a corner, his horse did not change his leg cleverly, and the pavement being also loose, slipped and fell on his side, throwing his rider upon the *trottoir*. The horse got up and trembled violently, but was unhurt. The rider lay motionless, except that his legs quivered on the pavement. They took him up and conveyed him into a druggist's shop, the master of which practised chirurgery. He had to be sent for; and before he could be found, Sir Charles recovered his reason—so much so, that when the chirurgeon approached with his fleam to bleed him, according to the practice of the day, the patient drew his sword, and assured the other he would let out every drop of blood in his body if he touched him.

He of the shorter but more lethal weapon hastily retreated. Sir Charles flung a guinea on the counter, and mounting his horse, rode him off rather faster than before this accident.

There was a dead silence!

"I believe that gentleman to be the devil!" said a thoughtful bystander. The crowd (it was a century ago) assented *nem con.*

Sir Charles arrived in Bloomsbury Square, found that the whole party was assembled. He therefore ordered his servant to parade before the door, and if he saw Mrs. Vane's carriage enter the square, to let him know, if possible, before she should reach the house. On entering he learned that Mr. Vane and his guests were in the garden (a very fine one), and joined them there.

Mrs. Vane demands another chapter, in which I will tell the reader who she was, and what excuse her husband had for his *liaison* with Margaret Woffington.

CHAPTER X

MABEL CHESTER was the beauty and toast of South Shropshire. She had refused the hand of half the country squires in a circle of some dozen miles, till at last Mr. Vane became her suitor. Besides a handsome face and person, Mr. Vane had accomplishments his rivals did not possess. He read poetry to her on mossy banks, an hour before sunset, and awakened sensibilities, which her other suitors shocked, and they them.

The lovely Mabel had a taste for beautiful things, without any excess of that severe quality called judgment.

I will explain. If you or I, reader, had read to her in the afternoon, amidst the smell of roses and eglantine, the chirp of the mavis, the hum of bees, the twinkling of butterflies, and the tinkle of distant sheep, something that combined all these sights, and sounds, and smells—say Milton's musical picture of Eden, P. L., lib. 3, and after that "Triplet on Kew," she would have instantly pronounced in favour of "Eden;" but if *we* had read her "Milton," and Mr. Vane had read her "Triplet," she would have as unhesitatingly preferred "Kew" to "Paradise."

She was a true daughter of Eve; the lady who, when an angel was telling her and her husband the truths of heaven in heaven's own music, slipped away into the kitchen, because she preferred hearing the story at second-hand, encumbered with digressions, and in mortal but marital accents.

When her mother, who guarded Mabel like a dragon, told her Mr. Vane was not rich enough, and she really must not give him so many opportunities, Mabel cried and embraced the dragon, and said, "O mother!" The dragon, finding her ferocity dissolving, tried to shake her off, but the goose would cry and embrace the dragon till it melted.

By-and-by Mr. Vane's uncle died suddenly and left him the great Stoken Church estate, and a trunk full of Jacobuses and Queen Anne's guineas—his own hoard and his father's —then the dragon spake comfortably and said—

"My child, he is now the richest man in Shropshire. He will not think of you now; so steel your heart."

Then Mabel, contrary to all expectations, did not cry; but with flushing cheek, pledged her life upon Ernest's love and

honour. And Ernest, as soon as the funeral, &c., left him free, galloped to Mabel, to talk of our good fortune. The dragon had done him injustice: that was not his weak point. So they were married! and they were very, very happy. But one month after, the dragon died, and that was their first grief; but they bore it together.

And Vane was not like the other Shropshire squires. His idea of pleasure was something his wife could share. He still rode, walked, and sat with her, and read to her, and composed songs for her, and about her, which she played and sang prettily enough, in her quiet lady-like way, and in a voice of honey dropping from the comb. Then she kept a keen eye upon him; and when she discovered what dishes he liked, she superintended those herself; and observing that he never failed to eat of a certain lemon pudding the dragon had originated, she always made this pudding herself, and she never told her husband she made it.

The first seven months of their marriage was more like blue sky than brown earth; and if any one had told Mabel that her husband was a mortal, and not an angel, sent to her, that her days and nights might be unmixed, uninterrupted heaven, she could hardly have realised the information.

When a vexatious litigant began to contest the will by which Mr. Vane was Lord of Stoken Church, and Mr. Vane went up to London to concert the proper means of defeating this attack, Mrs. Vane would gladly have compounded by giving the man two or three thousand acres, or the whole estate, if he wouldn't take less, not to rob her of her husband for a month; but she was docile, as she was amorous; so she cried (out of sight) a week; and let her darling go, with every misgiving a loving heart could have; but one! and that one, her own heart told her, was impossible.

The month rolled away—no symptom of a return. For this, Mr. Vane was not, in fact, to blame; but, towards the end of the next month, business became a convenient excuse. When three months had passed, Mrs. Vane became unhappy. She thought he too must feel the separation. She offered to come to him. He answered uncandidly. He urged the length, the fatigue of the journey. She was silenced; but some time later, she began to take a new view of his objections. "He is so self-denying," said she. "Dear Ernest, he longs for me; but he thinks it selfish to let me travel so far alone to see him."

Full of this idea, she yielded to her love. She made her

preparations, and wrote to him that if he did not forbid her peremptorily, he must expect to see her at his breakfast-table in a very few days.

Mr. Vane concluded this was a jest, and did not answer this letter at all.

Mrs. Vane started. She travelled with all speed; but coming to a halt at ——, she wrote to her husband that she counted on being with him at four of the clock on Thursday.

This letter preceded her arrival by a few hours. It was put into his hand at the same time with a note from Mrs. Woffington, telling him she should be at a rehearsal at Covent Garden. Thinking his wife's letter would keep, he threw it on one side into a sort of a tray, and after a hurried breakfast, went out of his house to the theatre. He returned, as we are aware, with Mrs. Woffington; and also, at her request, with Mr. Cibber, for whom they called on their way. He had forgotten his wife's letter, and was entirely occupied with his guests.

Sir Charles Pomander joined them, and found Mr. Colander, the head domestic of the London establishment, cutting with a pair of scissors every flower Mrs. Woffington fancied, that lady having a passion for flowers.

Colander, during his temporary absence from the interior, had appointed James Burdock to keep the house, and receive the two remaining guests, should they arrive.

This James Burdock was a faithful old country servant, who had come up with Mr. Vane, but left his heart at Willoughby. James Burdock had for some time been ruminating, and his conclusion was, that his mistress, Miss Mabel (as by force of habit he called her), was not treated as she deserved.

Burdock had been imported into Mr. Vane's family by Mabel; he had carried her in his arms when she was a child; he had held her upon a donkey when she was a little girl; and when she became a woman, it was he who taught her to stand close to her horse, and give him her foot, and spring while he lifted her steadily but strongly into her saddle, and when there, it was he who had instructed her that a horse was not a machine, that galloping tires it in time, and that galloping it on the hard road hammers it to pieces. "I taught the girl," thought James within himself.

This honest silver-haired old fellow seemed so ridiculous to Colander, the smooth, supercilious Londoner, that he deigned sometimes to converse with James, in order to quiz him. This very morning they had had a conversation.

"Poor Miss Mabel! dear heart. A twelvemonth married, and nigh six months of it a widow, or next door."

"We write to her, James, and entertain her replies, which are at considerable length.'

"Ay, but we don't read 'em!" said James, with an uneasy glance at the tray.

"Invariably, at our leisure; meantime we make ourselves happy amongst the wits and the syrens."

"And she do make others happy among the poor and the ailing."

"Which shows," said Colander superciliously, "the difference of tastes."

Burdock, whose eye had never been off his mistress's handwriting, at last took it up and said: "Master Colander, do, if ye please, sir, take this into master's dressing-room; do, now!"

Colander looked down on the missive with dilating eye. "Not a bill, James Burdock," said he reproachfully.

"A bill! bless ye, no. A letter from missus."

No, the dog would not take it in to his master; and poor James, with a sigh, replaced it in the tray.

This James Burdock, then, was left in charge of the hall by Colander, and it so happened that the change was hardly effected before a hurried knocking came to the street-door.

"Ay, ay!" grumbled Burdock, "I thought it would not be long. London for knocking and ringing all day, and ringing and knocking all night." He opened the door reluctantly and suspiciously, and in darted a lady, whose features were concealed by a hood. She glided across the hall, as if she was making for some point, and old James shuffled after her, crying, "Stop, stop! young woman. What is your name, young woman?"

"Why, James Burdock," cried the lady, removing her hood, "have you forgotten your mistress?"

"Mistress! Why, Miss Mabel, I ask your pardon, madam —here John, Margery!"

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Vane.

"But where are your trunks, Miss? And where's the coach, and Darby and Joan? To think of their drawing you all the way here! I'll have 'em into your room directly, ma'am. Miss, you've come just in time."

"What a dear, good, stupid old thing you are, James! Where is Ernest—Mr. Vane? James, is he well and happy? I want to surprise him."

"Yes, ma'am," said James, looking down.

"I left the stupid old coach at Islington, James. The something—pin was loose, or I don't know what. Could I wait two hours there? So I came on by myself; you wicked old man, you let me talk, and don't tell me how he is."

"Master is main well, ma'am, and thank you," said old Burdock, confused and uneasy.

"But is he happy? Of course he is. Are we not to meet to-day after six months? Ah! but never mind, they *are* gone by."

"Lord bless her!" thought the faithful old fellow. "If sitting down and crying could help her, I wouldn't be long."

By this time they were in the banqueting-room, and at the preparations there Mabel gave a start; she then coloured. "Oh! he has invited his friends to make acquaintance. I had rather we had been alone all this day and to-morrow. But he must not know that. No; *his* friends are *my* friends, and shall be too," thought the country wife. She then glanced with some misgiving at her travelling attire, and wished she had brought *one* trunk with her.

"James," said she, "where is my room? And mind, I forbid you to tell a soul I am come."

"Your room, Miss Mabel?"

"Well, any room where there is looking-glass and water."

She then went to a door which opened in fact on a short passage leading to a room occupied by Mr. Vane himself.

"No, no!" cried James. "That is master's room."

"Well, is not master's room mistress's room, old man? But stay; is he there?"

"No, ma'am; he is in the garden, with a power of fine folks."

"They shall not see me till I have made myself a little more decent," said the young beauty, who knew at bottom how little comparatively the colour of her dress could affect her appearance, and she opened Mr. Vane's door and glided in.

Burdock's first determination was, in spite of her injunction, to tell Colander; but, on reflection, he argued: "And then what will they do? They will put their heads together, and deceive us some other way. No!" thought James, with a touch of spite; "we shall see how they will all look." He argued also, that, at sight of his beautiful wife, his master must come to his senses, and the Colander faction be defeated; and, perhaps, by the mercy of Providence, Colander himself turned off.

Whilst thus ruminating, a thundering knock at the door

almost knocked him off his legs. "There ye go again," said he, and went angrily to the door. This time it was Hunsdon, who was in a desperate hurry to see his master.

"Where is Sir Charles Pomander, my honest fellow?" said he.

"In the garden, my Jack-a-dandy!" said Burdock furiously.

("Honest fellow," among servants, implies some moral inferiority.)

In the garden went Hunsdon. His master—all whose senses were playing sentinel—saw him, and left the company to meet him.

"She is in the house, sir."

"Good! Go—vanish!"

Sir Charles looked into the banquet-room; the haunch was being placed on the table. He returned with the information. He burned to bring husband and wife together: he counted each second lost that postponed this (to him) thrilling joy. Oh, how happy he was!—happier than the serpent, when he saw Eve's white teeth really strike into the apple!

"Shall we pay respect to this haunch, Mr. Quin?" said Vane gaily.

"If you please, sir," said Quin gravely.

Colander ran down a by-path with an immense bouquet, which he arranged for Mrs. Woffington in a vase at Mr. Vane's left hand. He then threw open the windows, which were on the French plan, and shut within a foot of the lawn.

The musicians in the arbour struck up, and the company, led by Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington, entered the room. And a charming room it was!—light, lofty, and large—adorned in the French way with white and gold. The table was an exact oval, and at it everybody could hear what any one said; an excellent arrangement where ideaed guests only are admitted—which is another excellent arrangement, though I see people don't think so.

The repast was luxurious and elegant. There was no profusion of unmeaning dishes; each was a *bonne-bouche*—an undeniable delicacy. The glass was beautiful, the plates silver; the flowers rose like walls from the table; the plate massive and glorious, rose-water in the hand-glasses; music crept in from the garden, deliciously subdued into what seemed a natural sound. A broad stream of southern sun gushed in fiery gold through the open window, and like a red-hot rainbow, danced through the stained glass above it.

Existence was a thing to bask in—in such a place, and so happy an hour!

The guests were Quin, Mrs. Clive, Mr. Cibber, Sir Charles Pomander, Mrs. Woffington, and Messrs. Soaper and Snarl, critics of the day. This pair, with wonderful sagacity, had arrived from the street as the haunch came from the kitchen. Good humour reigned; some cuts passed, but as the parties professed wit, they gave and took.

Quin carved the haunch, and was happy; Soaper and Snarl eating the same, and drinking Toquay, were mellowed and mitigated into human flesh. Mr. Vane and Mrs. Woffington were happy; he, because his conscience was asleep; and she, because she felt nothing now could shake her hold of him. Sir Charles was in a sort of mental chuckle. His head burned, his bones ached; but he was in a sort of nervous delight.

"Where is she?" thought he. "What will she do? Will she send her maid with a note? How blue he will look! Or, will she come herself? She is a country wife; there must be a scene. Oh! why doesn't she come into this room? She must know we are here! Is she watching somewhere?" His brain became puzzled, and his senses were sharpened to a point; he was all eye, ear, and expectation; and this was why he was the only one to hear a very slight sound behind the door we have mentioned, and next to perceive a lady's glove lying close to that door. Mabel had dropped it in her retreat. Putting this and that together, he was led to hope and believe she was there, making her toilette perhaps, and her arrival at present unknown.

"Do you expect no one else?" said he, with feigned carelessness, to Mr. Vane.

"No," said Mr. Vane, with real carelessness.

"It must be so! What fortune!" thought Pomander.

SOAPER.—Mr. Cibber looks no older than he did five years ago.

SNARL.—There was no room on his face for a fresh wrinkle.

SOAPER.—He! he! Nay, Mr. Snarl; Mr. Cibber is like old port: the more ancient he grows, the more delicious his perfume.

SNARL.—And the crustier he gets.

CLIVE.—Mr. Vane, you should always separate those two. Snarl, by himself, is just supportable, but when Soaper paves the way with his hypocritical praise, the pair are too much; they are a two-edged sword.

WOFFINGTON.—Wanting nothing but polish and point.

VANE.—Gentlemen, we abandon your neighbour, Mr. Quin, to you.

QUIN.—They know better. If they don't keep a civil tongue in their heads, no fat goes from here to them.

CIBBER.—Ah, Mr. Vane; this room is delightful; but it makes me sad. I knew this house in Lord Longueville's time; an unrivalled gallant, Peggy. You may just remember him, Sir Charles?

POMANDER (with his eye on a certain door).—Yes, yes; a gouty old fellow.

Cibber fired up. "I wish you may ever be like him. Oh the beauty, the wit, the *petits-soupers* that used to be here! Longueville was a great creature, Mr. Vane. I have known him entertain a fine lady in this room, while her rival was fretting and fuming on the other side of that door."

"Ah, indeed!" said Sir Charles.

"More shame for him," said Mr. Vane.

Here was luck! Pomander seized this opportunity of turning the conversation to his object. With a malicious twinkle in his eye, he inquired of Mr. Cibber what made him fancy the house had lost its virtue in Mr. Vane's hands.

"Because," said Cibber peevishly, "you all want the true *savoir faire* nowadays, because there is no *juste milieu*, young gentlemen. The young dogs of the day are all either unprincipled heathen, like yourself, or Amadisses, like our worthy host." The old gentleman's face and manners were like those of a patriarch, regretting the general decay of virtue, not the imaginary diminution of a single vice. He concluded with a sigh, that "The true *preux des dames* went out with the full periwig; stap my vitals!"

"A bit of fat, Mr. Cibber?" said Quin, whose jokes were not polished.

"Jemmy, thou art a brute," was the reply.

"You refuse, sir?" said Quin sternly.

"No, sir!" said Cibber with dignity; "I accept."

Pomander's eye was ever on the door.

"The old are so unjust to the young," said he. "You pretend that the Deluge washed away iniquity, and that a rake is a fossil. What," said he, leaning as it were on every word, "if I bet you a cool hundred that Vane has a petticoat in that room, and that Mrs. Woffington shall unearth her?"

The malicious dog thought this was the surest way to effect a dramatic exposure; because, if Peggy found Mabel to all

appearances concealed, Peggy would scold her, and betray herself.

"Pomander!" cried Vane, in great heat; then checking himself, he said coolly: "But you all know Pomander."

"None of you," replied that gentleman. "Bring a chair, sir," said he, authoritatively, to a servant, who, of course, obeyed.

Mrs. Clive looked at him, and thought: "There is something in this!"

"It is for the lady," said he coolly. Then leaning over the table, he said to Mrs. Woffington, with an impudent affectation of friendly understanding: "I ran her to earth in this house not ten minutes ago. Of course, I don't know who she is! But," smacking his lips, "a rustic Amaryllis, breathing all May-buds and Meadow-sweet."

"Have her out, Peggy!" shouted Cibber. "I know the run—there's the covert! Hark forward! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Vane rose, and with a sternness that brought the old beau up with a run, he said: "Mr. Cibber, age and infirmity are privileged; but for you, Sir Charles——"

"Don't be angry," interposed Mrs. Woffington, whose terror was lest he should quarrel with so practised a swordsman. "Don't you see it is a jest! and, as might be expected from poor Sir Charles, a very sorry one."

"A jest!" said Vane, white with rage. "Let it go no further, or it will be earnest!"

Mrs. Woffington placed her hand on his shoulder, and at that touch he instantly yielded, and sat down.

It was at this moment, when Sir Charles found himself for the present baffled—for he could no longer press his point, and search that room; when the attention of all was drawn to a dispute, which, for a moment, had looked like a quarrel; whilst Mrs. Woffington's hand still lingered, as only a woman's hand can linger in leaving the shoulder of the man she loves; it was at this moment, the door opened of its own accord, and a most beautiful woman stood, with a light step, upon the threshold!

Nobody's back was to her, except Mr. Vane's. Every eye, but his, was spell-bound upon her.

Mrs. Woffington withdrew her hand, as if a scorpion had touched her.

A stupor of astonishment fell on them all.

Mr. Vane, seeing the direction of all their eyes, slewed himself round in his chair into a most awkward position, and

when he saw the lady, he was utterly dumfounded! But she, as soon as he turned his face her way, glided up to him with a little half sigh, half cry of joy, and taking him round the neck, kissed him deliciously, while every eye at the table met every other eye in turn. One or two of the men rose; for the lady's beauty was as worthy of homage as her appearing was marvellous.

Mrs. Woffington, too astonished for emotion to take any definite shape, said, in what seemed an ordinary tone: "Who is this lady?"

"I am his wife, madam," said Mabel, in the voice of a skylark, and smiling friendly on the questioner.

"It is my wife!" said Vane, like a speaking-machine; he was scarcely in a conscious state. "It is my wife!" he repeated mechanically.

The words were no sooner out of Mabel's mouth than two servants, who had never heard of Mrs. Vane before, hastened to place on Mr. Vane's right hand the chair Pomander had provided; a plate and napkin were there in a twinkling, and the wife modestly, but as a matter of course, curtsied low, with an air of welcome to all her guests, and then glided into the seat her servants obsequiously placed for her.

The whole thing did not take half a minute!

CHAPTER XI

Mr. Vane, besides being a rich, was a magnificent man; when his features were in repose their beauty had a wise and stately character. Soaper and Snarl had admired, and bitterly envied him. At the present moment no one of his guests envied him —they began to realise his position. And he, a huge wheel of shame and remorse, began to turn and whirr before his eyes. He sat between two European beauties, and, pale and red by turns, shunned the eyes of both, and looked down at his plate in a cold sweat of humiliation, mortification, and shame.

The iron passed through Mrs. Woffington's soul. So! this was a villain too, the greatest villain of all—a hypocrite! She turned very faint, but she was under an enemy's eye, and under a rival's; the thought drove the blood back from her heart, and with a mighty effort she was Woffington again. Hitherto her *liaison* with Mr. Vane had called up the better part of her nature, and perhaps our reader has been taking

her for a good woman; but now all her dregs were stirred to the surface. The mortified actress gulled by a novice, the wronged and insulted woman, had but two thoughts: to defeat her rival—to be revenged on her false lover. More than one sharp spasm passed over her features before she could master them, and then she became smiles above, wormwood and red-hot steel below—all in less than half a minute.

As for the others, looks of keen intelligence passed between them, and they watched with burning interest for the *dénouement*. That interest was stronger than their sense of the comicality of all this (for the humorous view of what passes before our eyes, comes upon cool reflection, not often at the time).

Sir Charles, indeed, who had foreseen some of this, wore a demure look, belied by his glittering eye. He offered Cibber snuff, and the two satirical animals grinned over the snuff-box, like a malicious old ape and a mischievous young monkey.

The new-comer was charming; she was above the middle height, of a full though graceful figure; her abundant, glossy, bright brown hair glittered here and there like gold in the light; she had a snowy brow, eyes of the profoundest blue, a cheek like a peach, and a face beaming candour and goodness; the character of her countenance resembled "the Queen of the May," in Mr. Leslie's famous picture, more than any face of our day I can call to mind.

"You are not angry with me for this silly trick?" said she, with some misgiving. "After all, I am only two hours before my time; you know, dearest, I said four in my letter—did I not?"

Vane stammered. What could he say?

"And you have had three days to prepare you, for I wrote, like a good wife, to ask leave before starting; but he never so much as answered my letter, madam." (This she addressed to Mrs. Woffington, who smiled by main force.)

"Why," stammered Vane, "could you doubt? I—I——"

"No! Silence was consent, was it not? But I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will forgive me. It is six months since I saw him—so you understand—I warrant me you did not look for me so soon, ladies?"

"Some of us did not look for you at all, madam," said Mrs. Woffington.

"What, Ernest did not tell you he expected me?"

"No! He told us this banquet was in honour of a lady's first visit to his house, but none of us imagined that lady to be his wife."

Vane began to writhe under that terrible tongue, whose point hitherto had ever been turned away from him.

"He intended to steal a march on us," said Pomander drily; "and with your help, we steal one on him;" and he smiled maliciously on Mrs. Woffington.

"But, madam," said Mr. Quin, "the moment you did arrive, I kept sacred for you a bit of the fat, for which, I am sure, you must be ready. Pass her plate!"

"Not at present, Mr. Quin," said Mr. Vane hastily. "She is about to retire and change her travelling-dress."

"Yes, dear; but you forget, I am a stranger to your friends. Will you not introduce me to them first?"

"No, no!" cried Vane, in trepidation. "It is not usual to introduce in the *beau monde*."

"We always introduce ourselves," rejoined Mrs. Woffington; and she rose slowly, with her eye on Vane. He cast a look of abject entreaty on her; but there was no pity in that curling lip and awful eye. He closed his own eyes, and waited for the blow. Sir Charles threw himself back in his chair, and chuckling, prepared for the explosion. Mrs. Woffington saw him, and cast on him a look of ineffable scorn; and then she held the whole company fluttering a long while. At length: "The Honourable Mrs. Quickly, madam," said she, indicating Mrs. Clive.

This turn took them all by surprise. Pomander bit his lip.

"Sir John Brute——"

"Falstaff," cried Quin; "hang it!"

"Sir John Brute Falstaff," resumed Mrs. Woffington. "We call him, for brevity, Brute."

Vane drew a long breath. "Your neighbour is Lord Foppington; a butterfly of some standing, and a little gouty."

"Sir Charles Pomander."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Vane. "It is the good gentleman who helped us out of the slough, near Huntingdon. Ernest, if it had not been for this gentleman, I should not have had the pleasure of being here now." And she beamed on the good Pomander.

Mr. Vane did not rise and embrace Sir Charles.

"All the company thanks the good Sir Charles," said Cibber, bowing.

"I see it in all their faces," said the good Sir Charles drily.

Mrs. Woffington continued: "Mr. Soaper, Mr. Snarl; gentlemen, who would butter and slice up their own fathers!"

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Vane faintly.

"Critics!" And she dropped, as it were, the word drily, with a sweet smile, into Mabel's plate.

Mrs. Vane was relieved; she had apprehended cannibals. London, they had told her, was full of curiosities.

"But yourself, madam?"

"I am the Lady Betty Modish; at your service."

A four-inch grin went round the table. The dramatical old rascal, Cibber, began now to look at it as a bit of genteel comedy, and slipped out his note-book under the table. Pomander cursed her ready wit, which had disappointed him of his catastrophe. Vane wrote on a slip of paper: "Pity and respect the innocent!" and passed it to Mrs. Woffington. He could not have done a more superfluous or injudicious thing.

"And now, Ernest," cried Mabel, "for the news from Willoughby."

Vane stopped her in dismay. He felt how many satrical eyes and ears were upon him and his wife. "Pray go and change your dress first, Mabel," cried he, fully determined that on her return she should not find the present party there.

Mrs. Vane cast an imploring look on Mrs. Woffington. "My things are not come," said she. "And, Lady Betty, I had so much to tell him, and to be sent away;" and the deep blue eyes began to fill.

Now, Mrs. Woffington was determined that this lady, who, she saw, was simple, should disgust her husband, by talking twaddle before a band of satirists. So she said warmly: "It is not fair on us. Pray, madam, your budget of country news. Clouted cream so seldom comes to London quite fresh."

"There, you see, Ernest," said the unsuspicious soul. "First, you must know that Grey Gillian is turned out for a brood mare, so old George won't let me ride her; old servants are such tyrants, my lady. And my Barbary hen has laid two eggs; Heaven knows the trouble we had to bring her to it. And Dame Best, that is my husband's old nurse, Mrs. Quickly, has had soup and pudding from the Hall every day; and once she went so far as to say it wasn't altogether a bad pudding. She is not a very grateful woman, in a general way, poor thing! I made it with these hands."

Vane writhed.

"Happy pudding!" observed Mr. Cibber.

"Is this mockery, sir?" cried Vane, with a sudden burst of irritation.

"No, sir; it is gallantry," replied Cibber, with perfect coolness.

"Will you hear a little music in the garden?" said Vane to Mrs. Woffington, pooh-poohing his wife's news.

"Not till I hear the end of Dame Bess."

"Best, my lady."

"Dame Best interests *me*," Mr. Vane.

"Ay! and Ernest is very fond of her, too, when he is at home. She is in her nice new cottage, dear; but she misses the draughts that were in her old one—they were like old friends. 'The only ones I have, I'm thinking,' said the dear cross old thing; and there stood I, on her floor, with a flannel petticoat in both hands, that I had made for her, and ruined my finger. Look else, my Lord Foppington?" She extended a hand the colour of cream.

"Permit me, madam?" taking out his glasses, with which he inspected her finger; and gravely announced to the company: "The laceration is, in fact, discernible. May I be permitted, madam," added he, "to kiss this fair hand, which I should never have suspected of having ever made itself half so useful?"

"Ay, my lord!" said she, colouring slightly, "you shall, because you are so old; but I don't say for a young gentleman, unless it was the one that belongs to me; and he does not ask me."

"My dear Mabel, pray remember we are not at Willoughby."

"I see we are not, Ernest;" and the dove-like eyes filled brimful, and all her innocent prattle was put an end to.

"What brutes men are!" thought Mrs. Woffington. "They are not worthy even of a fool like this."

Mr. Vane once more pressed her to hear a little music in the garden, and this time she consented. Mr. Vane was far from being unmoved by his wife's arrival and her true affection. But she worried him; he was anxious, above all things, to escape from his present position and separate the rival queens; and this was the only way he could see to do it. He whispered Mabel, and bade her somewhat peremptorily rest herself for an hour after her journey, and he entered the garden with Mrs. Woffington.

Now, the other gentlemen admired Mrs. Vane the most. She was new. She was as lovely, in her way, as Peggy; and it was the young May-morn beauty of the country. They forgave her simplicity, and even her goodness, on account of her beauty; men are not severe judges of beautiful women. They all solicited her to come with them, and be the

queen of the garden. But the good wife was obedient. Her lord had told her she was fatigued; so she said she was tired.

"Mr. Vane's garden will lack its sweetest and fairest flower, madam," cried Cibber, "if we leave you here."

"Nay, my lord, there are fairer than I."

"Poor Quin!" cried Kitty Clive; "to have to leave the alderman's walk for the garden-walk."

"All I regret," said the honest glutton stoutly, "is that I go without carving for Mrs. Vane."

"You are very good, Sir John; I will be more troublesome to you at supper-time."

When they were all gone, she couldn't help sighing. It almost seemed as if everybody was kinder to her than he whose kindness alone she valued. "And he must take Lady Betty's hand instead of mine," thought she. "But that is good breeding, I suppose. I wish there was no such thing: we are very happy without it in Shropshire." Then this poor little soul was ashamed of herself, and took herself to task. "Poor Ernest," said she, pitying the wrong-doer, like a woman, "he was not pleased to be so taken by surprise. No wonder; they are so ceremonious in London. How good of him not to be angry!" Then she sighed; her heart had received a damp. His voice seemed changed, and he did not meet her eyes with the look he wore at Willoughby. She looked timidly into the garden. She saw the gay colours of beaux, as well as of belles—for in these days broadcloth had not displaced silk and velvet—glancing and shining among the trees; and she sighed, but presently brightening up a little, she said: "I will go and see that the coffee is hot and clear, and the chocolate well mixed for them." The poor child wanted to do something to please her husband. Before she could carry out this act of domestic virtue, her attention was drawn to a strife of tongues in the hall. She opened the folding-doors, and there was a fine gentleman obstructing the entrance of a sombre rusty figure, with a portfolio and a manuscript under each arm.

The fine gentleman was Colander. The seedy personage was the eternal Triplet, come to make hay with his five-foot rule while the sun shone. Colander had opened the door to him, and he had shot into the hall. The major-domo obstructed the further entrance of such a coat.

"I tell you my master is not at home," remonstrated the major-domo.

"How can you say so," cried Mrs. Vane in surprise, "when you know he is in the garden?"

"Simpleton!" thought Colander.

"Show the gentleman in."

"Gentleman!" muttered Colander.

Triplet thanked her for her condescension; he would wait for Mr. Vane in the hall. "I came by appointment, madam; this is the only excuse for the importunity you have just witnessed."

Hearing this, Mrs. Vane dismissed Colander to inform his master. Colander bowed loftily, and walked into the servants' hall without deigning to take the last proposition into consideration.

"Come in here, sir," said Mabel; "Mr. Vane will come as soon as he can leave his company." Triplet entered in a series of obsequious jerks. "Sit down and rest you, sir." And Mrs. Vane seated herself at the table, and motioned with her white hand to Triplet to sit beside her.

Triplet bowed, and sat on the edge of a chair, and smirked and dropped his portfolio, and instantly begged Mrs. Vane's pardon; in taking it up, he let fall his manuscript, and was again confused; but in the middle of some superfluous and absurd excuse his eye fell on the haunch; it straightway dilated to an enormous size, and he became suddenly silent and absorbed in contemplation.

"You look sadly tired, sir."

"Why, yes, madam. It is a long way from Lambeth Walk, and it is passing hot, madam." He took his handkerchief out, and was about to wipe his brow, but returned it hastily to his pocket. "I beg your pardon, madam," said Triplet, whose ideas of breeding, though speculative, were severe, "I forgot myself."

Mabel looked at him, and coloured, and slightly hesitated. At last she said: "I'll be bound you came in such a hurry you forgot—you mustn't be angry with me—to have your dinner first?"

For Triplet looked like an absurd wolf—all benevolence and starvation!

"What divine intelligence!" thought Trip. "How strange, madam," cried he, "you have hit it! This accounts, at once, for a craving I feel. Now you remind me, I recollect carving for others; I did forget to remember myself. Not that I need have forgot it to-day, madam; but being used to forget it, I did not remember not to forget it to-day, madam,

that was all." And the author of this intelligent account smiled, very, very, very absurdly.

She poured him out a glass of wine. He rose and bowed; but peremptorily refused it, with his tongue—his eye drank it.

"But you must," persisted this hospitable lady.

"But, madam, consider I am not entitled to—Nectar, as I am a man!"

The white hand was filling his plate with partridge pie: "But, madam, you don't consider how you overwhelm me with your—Ambrosia, as I am a poet!"

"I am sorry Mr. Vane should keep you waiting."

"By no means, madam; it is very fortunate—I mean it procures me the pleasure of——" (here articulation became obstructed) "your society, madam. Besides, the servants of the Muse are used to waiting. What we are not used to is" (here the white hand filled his glass) "being waited upon by Hebe and the Twelve Graces, whose health I have the honour——" (deglutition).

"A poet!" cried Mabel; "oh! I am so glad! Little did I think ever to see a living poet! Dear heart! I should not have known, if you had not told me. Sir, I love poetry!"

"It is in your face, madam." Triplet instantly whipped out his manuscript, put a plate on one corner of it, and a decanter on the other, and begged her opinion of this trifle, composed, said he, "in honour of a lady Mr. Vane entertains to-day."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Vane, and coloured with pleasure. How ungrateful she had been! Here was an attention!—For, of course, she never doubted that the verses were in honour of her arrival.

"'Bright being——'"

sang out Triplet.

"Nay, sir," said Mabel; "I think I know the lady, and it would be hardly proper of me——"

"Oh! madam!" said Triplet solemnly; "strictly correct, madam!" And he spread his hand out over his bosom. "Strictly!—'Blunderbuss' (my poetical name, madam) never stooped to the taste of the town.

"'Bright being, thou——'"

"But you must have another glass of wine first, and a slice of the haunch."

"With alacrity, madam." He laid in a fresh stock of provisions.

Strange it was to see them side by side!—*he*, a Don Quixote, with cordage instead of lines in his mahogany face, and clothes hanging upon him: *she*, smooth, duck-like, delicious, and bright as an opening rose fresh with dew!

She watched him kindly, archly, and demurely, and still plied him, country wise, with every mortal thing on the table.

But the poet was not a boa-constrictor, and even a boa-constrictor has an end. Hunger satisfied, his next strongest feeling, simple vanity, remained to be contented. As the last morsel went in out came:

"'Bright being, thou whose ra——'"

"No! no!" said she, who fancied herself (and not without reason) the bright being. "Mr. Vane intended them for a surprise."

"As you please, madam;" and the disappointed bore sighed. "But you would have liked them, for the theme inspired me. The kindest, the most generous of women! Don't you agree with me, madam?"

Mabel Vane opened her eyes. "Hardly, sir," laughed she.

"If you knew her as I do."

"I ought to know her better, sir."

"Ay, indeed! Well, madam, now her kindness to me, for instance—a poor devil like me. The expression, I trust, is not disagreeable to you, madam? If so, forgive me, and consider it withdrawn."

"La, sir! civility is so cheap, if you go to that."

"Civility, ma'am? Why, she has saved me from despair—from starvation perhaps."

"Poor thing! Well indeed, sir, you looked—you looked—what a shame! and you a poet."

"From an epitaph to an epic, madam."

At this moment a figure looked in upon them from the garden, but retreated unobserved. It was Sir Charles Pomander, who had slipped away, with the heartless and malicious intention of exposing the husband to the wife, and profiting by her indignation and despair. Seeing Triplet, he made an extemporaneous calculation that so infernal a chatter-box could not be ten minutes in her company without telling her everything, and this would serve his turn very well. He therefore postponed his purpose, and strolled away to a short distance.

Triplet justified the baronet's opinion. Without any sort of

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sequency, he now informed Mrs. Vane that the benevolent lady was to sit to him for her portrait.

Here was a new attention of Ernest's. How good he was, and how wicked and ungrateful she!

"What! are you a painter too?" she inquired.

"From a house-front to an historical composition, madam."

"Oh, what a clever man! And so Ernest commissioned you to paint a portrait?"

"No, madam; for that I am indebted to the lady herself."

"The lady herself?"

"Yes, madam; and I expected to find her here. Will you add to your kindness by informing me whether she has arrived? Or she is gone——"

"Who, sir? (Oh dear! not my portrait! Oh, Ernest!)"

"Who, madam!" cried Triplet; "why, Mrs. Woffington!"

"She is not here," said Mrs. Vane, who remembered all the names perfectly well. "There is one charming lady among our guests; her face took me in a moment; but she is a titled lady: there is no Mrs. Woffington amongst them."

"Strange!" replied Triplet; "she was to be here; and in fact that is why I expedited these lines in her honour."

"In *her* honour, sir?"

"Yes, madam. Allow me—

"'Bright being, thou whose radiant brow——'"

"No! no! I don't care to hear them now, for I don't know the lady."

"Well, madam—but at least you have seen her act?"

"Act! You don't mean all this is for an actress?"

"*An* actress? *The* actress! And you have never seen her act? What a pleasure you have to come! To see her act is a privilege; but to act with her, as *I* once did! But she does not remember that, nor shall I remind her, madam," said Triplet sternly. "On that occasion I was hissed, owing to circumstances which, for the credit of our common nature, I suppress."

"What! are you an actor too? You are everything."

"And it was in a farce of my own, madam, which, by the strangest combination of accidents, was damned!"

"A play-writer? Oh, what clever men there are in the world—in London, at least! He is a play-writer too. I wonder my husband comes not. Does Mr. Vane—does Mr. Vane admire this actress?" said she suddenly,

"Mr. Vane, madam, is a gentleman of taste," said he pompously.

"Well, sir," said the lady languidly, "she is not here." Triplet took the hint and rose. "Good-bye," said she sweetly; "and thank you kindly for your company, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Triplet, madam—James Triplet, of 10 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. Occasional verses, odes, epithalamia, elegies, dedications, squibs, impromptus, and hymns, executed with spirit, punctuality, and secrecy. Portraits painted, and instruction in declamation, sacred, profane, and dramatic. The card, madam" (and he drew it as doth a theatrical fop his rapier), "of him who, to all these qualifications, adds a prouder still—that of being, madam, your humble, devoted, and grateful servant, JAMES TRIPLET."

He bowed in a line from his right shoulder to his left toe, and moved off. But Triplet could not go all at one time out of such company; he was given to return in real life, he had played this trick so often on the stage. He came back, exuberant with gratitude.

"The fact is, madam," said he, "strange as it may appear to you, a kind hand has not so often been held out to me, that I should forget it, especially when that hand is so fair and gracious. May I be permitted, madam—you will impute it to gratitude, rather, than audacity—I—I——" (whimper), "madam" (with sudden severity), "I am gone!"

These last words he pronounced with the right arm at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the fingers pointing horizontally. The stage had taught him this grace also. In his day, an actor who had three words to say, such as, "My Lord's carriage is waiting," came on the stage with the right arm thus elevated, delivered his message in the tone of a falling dynasty, wheeled like a soldier, and retired with the left arm pointing to the sky and the right extended behind him like a setter's tail.

Left to herself, Mabel was uneasy. "Ernest is so warm-hearted." This was the way she put it even to herself. He admired her acting, and wished to pay her a compliment. "What if I carried him the verses?" She thought she should surely please him, by showing she was not the least jealous or doubtful of him. The poor child wanted so to win a kind look from her husband; but ere she could reach the window Sir Charles Pomander had entered it.

Now, Sir Charles was naturally welcome to Mrs. Vane; for

all she knew of him was, that he had helped her on the road to her husband.

POMANDER.—"What, madam! all alone here as in Shropshire?"

MABEL.—"For the moment, sir."

POMANDER.—"Force of habit. A husband with a wife in Shropshire is so like a bachelor."

MABEL.—"Sir!"

POMANDER.—"And our excellent Ernest is such a favourite."

MABEL.—"No wonder, sir."

POMANDER.—"Few can so pass from the larva state of country squire to the butterfly nature of beau."

MABEL.—"Yes" (sadly), "I find him changed."

POMANDER.—"Changed! Transformed. He is now the prop of the 'Cocoa Tree,' the star of Ranelagh, the Lauzur of the greenroom."

MABLE.—"The green room! Where is that? You mean kindly, sir; but you make me unhappy."

POMANDER.—"The greenroom, my dear madam, is the bower where houris put off their wings, and goddesses become dowdies; where Lady Macbeth weeps over her lap-dog, dead from repletion; and Belvidera soothes her broken heart with a dozen of oysters: in a word, it is the place where actors and actresses become men and women, and act their own parts with skill, instead of a poet's clumsily."

MABEL.—"Actors! actresses! Does Mr. Vane frequent such——"

POMANDER.—"He has earned in six months a reputation many a fine gentleman would give his ears for. Not a scandalous journal his initials have not figured in; not an actress of reputation gossip has not given him for a conquest."

"How dare you say this to me?" cried Mrs. Vane, with a sudden flash of indignation, and then the tears streamed over her lovely cheeks; and even a Pomander might have foreborne to torture her so; but Sir Charles had no mercy.

"You would be sure to learn it," said he; "and with malicious additions. It is better to hear the truth from a friend."

"A friend? He is no friend to a house who calumniates the husband to the wife. Is it the part of a friend to distort dear Ernest's kindliness and gaiety into ill morals; to pervert his love of poetry and plays into an unworthy attachment to actors and—oh!" and the tears would come. But she dried them, for now she hated this man; with all the little power

of hatred she had, she detested him. "Do you suppose I did not know Mrs. Woffington was to come to us to-day?" cried she, struggling passionately against her own fears and Sir Charles's inuendoes.

"What!" cried he; "you recognised her? You detected the actress of all work under the airs of Lady Betty Modish?"

"Lady Betty Modish!" cried Mabel; "that good, beautiful face!"

"Ah!" cried Sir Charles, "I see you did not. Well, Lady Betty was Mrs. Woffington!"

"Whom my husband, I know, had invited here to present her with these verses, which I shall take him for her;" and her poor little lip trembled. "Had the visit been in any other character, as you are so base, so cruel as to insinuate (what have I done to you that you kill me so, you wicked gentleman?), would he have chosen the day of my arrival?"

"Not if he knew you were coming," was the cool reply.

"And he did know—I wrote to him."

"Indeed!" said Pomander, fairly puzzled.

Mrs. Vane caught sight of her handwriting on the tray and darted to it, and seized her letter, and said triumphantly—

"My last letter, written upon the road—see!"

Sir Charles took it with surprise, but turning it in his hand, a cool satirical smile came to his face. He handed it back, and said coldly—

"Read me the passage, madam, on which you argue."

Poor Mrs. Vane turned the letter in her hand, and her eye became instantly glazed; the seal was unbroken! She gave a sharp cry of agony, like a wounded deer. She saw Pomander no longer; she was alone with her great anguish. "I had but my husband and my God in the world," cried she. "My mother is gone. My God, have pity on me! my husband does not love me."

The cold villain was startled at the mighty storm his mean hand had raised. This creature had not only more feeling, but more passion than a hundred libertines. He muttered some villain's commonplaces; while this unhappy young lady raised her hands to heaven, and sobbed in a way very terrible to any manly heart.

"He is unworthy you," muttered Pomander. "He has forfeited your love: he has left you nothing but revenge. Be comforted. Let me, who have learned already to adore you——"

"So," cried she, turning on him in a moment (for on some

points woman's instinct is the lightning of wisdom), "this, sir, was your object? I may no longer hold a place in my husband's heart! but I am mistress of his house. Leave it, sir, and never return to it whilst I live."

Sir Charles, again discomfited, bowed reverentially. "Your wish shall ever be respected by me, madam! But here they come. Use the right of a wife. Conceal yourself in that high chair. See, I turn it, so that they cannot see you. At least, you will find I have but told you the truth."

"No!" cried Mabel violently. "I will not spy upon my husband at the dictation of his treacherous friend."

Sir Charles vanished. He was no sooner gone than Mrs. Vane crouched trembling and writhing with jealousy, in the large, high-backed chair. She heard her husband and the *soi-disant* Lady Betty Modish enter. During their absence Mrs. Woffington had doubtless been playing her cards with art; for it appeared that a reconciliation was now taking place. The lady, however, was still cool and distant. It was poor Mabel's fate to hear these words: "You must permit me to go alone, Mr. Vane. I insist upon leaving this house alone."

On this he whispered to her.

She answered: "You are not justified."

"I can explain all," was his reply. "I am ready to renounce credit, character, all the world for you."

They passed out of the room before the unhappy listener could recover the numbing influence of these deadly words.

But the next moment she started wildly up, and cried as one drowning cries vaguely for help: "Ernest! oh, no—no! you cannot use me so! Ernest—husband! Oh, mother! mother!"

She rose, and would have made for the door, but nature had been too cruelly tried. At the first step she could no longer see anything; and the next moment, swooning dead away, she fell back insensible, with her head and shoulders resting on the chair.

CHAPTER XII

Mr. Vane was putting Mrs. Woffington into her chair, when he thought he heard his name cried. He bade that lady a mournful farewell, and stepped back into his own hall. He had no sooner done so, than he heard a voice, the accent of which alarmed him, though he distinguished no word. He hastily crossed the hall, and flew into the banquet-room. Coming

rapidly in at the folding-doors he almost fell over his wife, lying insensible, half upon the floor, and half upon the chair. When he saw her pale and motionless, a terrible misgiving seized him; he fell on his knees.

"Mabel, Mabel! cried he, "my love! my innocent wife! Oh, God! what have I done? Perhaps it is the fatigue—perhaps she has fainted."

"No, it is not the fatigue!" screamed a voice near him. It was old James Burdock, who, with his white hair streaming, and his eye gleaming with fire, shook his fist in his master's face. "No, it is not the fatigue, you villain! It is you who have killed her, with your jezebels and harlots, you scoundrel!"

"Send the women here, James, for God's sake! cried Mr. Vane, not even noticing the insult he had received from a servant. He stamped furiously, and cried for help. The whole whosehold was round her in a moment. They carried her to bed.

The remorse-stricken man, his own knees trembling under him, flew, in an agony of fear and self-reproach, for a doctor!

A doctor?

CHAPTER XIII

During the garden scene Mr. Vane had begged Mrs. Woffington to let him accompany her. She peremptorily refused, and said in the same breath she was going to Triplet, in Hercules Buildings, to have her portrait finished.

Had Mr. Vane understood the sex, he would not have interpreted her refusal to the letter, when there was a postscript, the meaning of which was so little enigmatical.

Some three hours after the scene we have described, Mrs. Woffington sat in Triplet's apartment; and Triplet, palette in hand, painted away upon her portrait.

Mrs. Woffington was in that languid state which comes to women after their hearts have received a blow. She felt as if life was ended, and but the dregs of existence remained; but at times a flood of bitterness rolled over her, and she resigned all hope of perfect happiness in this world—all hope of loving and respecting the same creature; and at these moments she had but one idea—to use her own power, and bind her lover to her by chains never to be broken; and to close her eyes, and glide down the precipice of the future.

"I think you are master of this art," said she very languidly to Triplet, "you paint so rapidly."

"Yes, madam," said Triplet gloomily; and painted on. "Confound this shadow!" added he; and painted on.

His soul, too, was clouded. Mrs. Woffington, yawning in his face, had told him she had invited all Mr. Vane's company to come and praise his work, and ever since that he had been *morne et silencieux.*

"You are fortunate," continued Mrs. Woffington, not caring what she said; "it is so difficult to make execution keep pace with conception."

"Yes, ma'am;" and he painted on.

"You are satisfied with it?"

"Anything but, ma'am;" and he painted on.

"Cheerful soul!—then I presume it is like?"

"Not a bit, ma'am;" and he painted on.

Mrs. Woffington stretched.

"You can't yawn, ma'am—you can't yawn."

"Oh yes, I can. You are such good company;" and she stretched again.

"I was just about to catch the turn of the lip," remonstrated Triplet.

"Well, catch it—it won't run away."

"I'll try, ma'am. A pleasant half-hour it will be for me, when they all come here like cits at a shilling ordinary—each for his cut."

"At a sensitive goose!"

"That is as may be, madam. Those critics flay us alive!"

"You should not hold so many doors open to censure."

"No, ma'am. Head a little more that way. I suppose you *can't* sit quiet, ma'am?—then never mind!" (This resignation was intended as a stinging reproach.) "Mr. Cibber, with his sneering snuff-box! Mr. Quin, with his humorous bludgeon. Mrs. Clive, with her tongue! Mr. Snarl, with his abuse! And Mr. Soaper, with his praise!—arsenic in treacle, I call it! But there, I deserve it all! For look on this picture, and on this!"

"Meaning, I am painted as well as my picture!"

"Oh no, no, no! But to turn from your face, madam—on which the lightning of expression plays continually—to this stony, detestable, dead daub!—I could—and I will, too! Imposture! dead caricature of life and beauty, take that!" and he dashed his palette-knife through the canvas. "Libellous lie against nature and Mrs. Woffington, take that!" and

he stabbed the canvas again; then, with sudden humility: "I beg your pardon, ma'am," said he, "for this apparent outrage, which I trust you will set down to the excitement attendant upon failure. The fact is, I am an incapable ass, and no painter! Others have often hinted as much; but I never observed it myself till now!"

"Right through my pet dimple!" said Mrs. Woffington, with perfect *nonchalance*. "Well, now I suppose I may yawn, or do what I like?"

"You may, madam," said Triplet gravely. "I have forfeited what little control I had over you, madam."

So they sat opposite each other in mournful silence. At length the actress suddenly rose. She struggled fiercely against her depression, and vowed that melancholy should not benumb her spirits and her power.

"He ought to have been here by this time," said she to herself. "Well, I will not mope for him: I must do something. Triplet," said she.

"Madam."

"Nothing."

"No, madam."

She sat gently down again, and leaned her head on her hand, and thought. She was beautiful as she thought!—her body seemed bristling with mind! At last her thoughtful gravity was illumined by a smile: she had thought out something *excogitaverat*.

"Triplet, the picture is quite ruined!"

"Yes, madam. And a coach-load of criticism coming!"

"Triplet, we actors and actresses have often bright ideas."

"Yes, ma'am."

"When we take other people's!"

"He, he!" went Triplet. "Those are our best, madam!"

"Well, sir, I have got a bright idea."

"You don't say so, ma'am!"

"Don't be a brute, dear!" said the lady gravely.

Triplet stared!

"When I was in France, taking lessons of Dumesnil, one of the actors of the Théâtre Français had his portrait painted by a rising artist. The others were to come and see it. They determined beforehand to mortify the painter and the sitter by abusing the work in good set terms. But somehow this got wind, and the patients resolved to be the physicians. They put their heads together, and contrived that the living face should be in the canvas, surrounded by the accessories:

these, of course, were painted. Enter the actors, who played their little prearranged farce; and when they had each given the picture a slap, the picture rose and laughed in their faces, and discomfited them! By the bye, the painter did not stop there: he was not content with a short laugh, he laughed at them five hundred years!"

"Good gracious, Mrs. Woffington!"

"He painted a picture of the whole thing; and as his work is immortal, ours an April snowflake, he has got tremendously the better of those rash little satirists. Well, Trip, what is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose; so give me the sharpest knife in the house."

Triplet gave her a knife, and looked confused, while she cut away the face of the picture, and by dint of scraping, cutting, and measuring, got her face two parts through the canvas. She then made him take his brush and paint all round her face, so that the transition might not be too abrupt. Several yards of green baize were also produced. This was to be disposed behind the easel, so as to conceal her.

Triplet painted here, and touched and retouched there. Whilst thus occupied he said, in his calm, resigned way: "It won't do, madam. I suppose you know that?"

"I know nothing," was the reply. "Life is a guess. I don't think we could deceive Roxalana and Lucy this way, because their eyes are without coloured spectacles; but when people have once begun to see by prejudices and judge by jargon, what can't be done with them? Who knows? Do you? I don't; so let us try."

"I beg your pardon, madam; my brush touched your face."

"No offence, sir; I am used to that. And I beg, if you can't tone the rest of the picture up to me, that you will instantly tone me down to the rest. Let as be in tune, whatever it costs, sir."

"I will avail myself of the privilege, madam, but sparingly. Failure, which his certain, madam, will cover us with disgrace."

"Nothing is certain in this life, sir, except that you are a goose. It succeeded in France; and England can match all Europe for fools. Besides, it will be well done. They say Davy Garrick can turn his eyes into bottled gooseberries. Well, Peg Woffington will turn hers into black currants. Haven't you done? I wonder they have not come. Make haste!"

"They will know by its beauty I never did it."

"That is a sensible remark, Trip. But I think they will rather argue backwards: that as you did it, it cannot be

beautiful, and so cannot be me. Your reputation will be our shield."

"Well, madam, now you mention it, they are like enough to take that ground. They despise all I do if they did not——"

"You would despise them."

At this moment the pair were startled by the sound of a coach. Triplet turned as pale as ashes. Mrs. Woffington had her misgivings; but not choosing to increase the difficulty, she would not let Triplet, whose self-possession she doubted, see any sign of emotion in her.

"Lock the door," said she firmly, "and don't be silly. Now hold up my green baize petticoat, and let me be in a half-light. Now put that table and those chairs before me, so that they can't come right up to me; and, Triplet, don't let them come within six yards, if you can help it. Say it is unfinished, and so must be seen from a focus."

"A focus! I don't know what you mean."

"No more do I; no more will they, perhaps; and if they don't, they will swallow it directly. Unlock the door: are they coming?"

"They are only at the first stair."

"Mr. Triplet, your face is a book, where one may read strange matters. For Heaven's sake, compose yourself: let all the risk lie in one countenance. Look at me, sir. Make your face like the Book of Daniel in a Jew's back-parlour. Volto Sciolto is your cue."

"Madam, madam, how your tongue goes! I hear them on the stairs: pray don't speak!"

"Do you know what we are going to do?" continued the tormenting Peggy. "We are going to weigh goose's feathers! to criticise criticism, Trip——"

"Hush! hush!"

A grampus was heard outside the door, and Triplet opened it. There was Quin leading the band.

"Have a care, sir," cried Triplet; "there is a hiatus the third step from the door."

"A *gradus ad Parnassum* awanting," said Mr. Cibber.

Triplet's heart sank. The hole had been there six months, and he had found nothing witty to say about it, and at first sight Mr. Cibber had done its business. And on such men he and his portrait were to attempt a preposterous delusion. Then there was Snarl, who wrote critiques on painting and guided the national taste. The unlucky exhibiter was in a cold sweat. He led the way like a thief going to the gallows.

"The picture being unfinished, gentlemen," said he, "must, if you would do me justice, be seen from a—a focus: must be judged from here, I mean."

"Where, sir?" said Mr. Cibber.

"About here, sir, if you please," said poor Triplet faintly.

"It looks like a finished picture from here," said Mrs. Clive.

"Yes, madam," groaned Triplet.

They all took up a position, and Triplet timidly raised his eyes along with the rest: he was a little surprised. The actress had flattened her face! She had done all that could be done, and more than he had conceived possible, in the way of extracting life and the atmosphere of expression from her countenance. She was "dead still!"

There was a pause.

Triplet fluttered. At last some of them spoke as follows:

SOAPER.—"Ah!"

QUIN.—"Ho!"

CLIVE.—"Eh!"

CIBBER.—"Humph!"

These interjections are small on paper, but as the good creatures uttered them they were eloquent; there was a cheerful variety of dispraise skilfully thrown into each of them.

"Well," continued Soaper, with his everlasting smile.

Then the fun began.

"May I be permitted to ask whose portrait this is?" said Mr. Cibber slily.

"I distinctly told you it was to be Peg Woffington's," said Mrs. Clive. "I think you might take my word."

"Do you act as truly as you paint?" said Quin.

"Your fame runs no risk from me, sir!" replied Triplet.

"It is not like Peggy's beauty! Eh?" rejoined Quin.

"I can't agree with you," cried Kitty Clive. "I think it a very pretty face, and not at all like Peg Woffington's."

"Compare paint with paint," said Quin. "Are you sure you ever saw down to Peggy's real face?"

Triplet had seen with alarm that Mr. Snarl spoke not; many satirical expressions crossed his face, but he said nothing. Triplet gathered from this that he had at once detected the trick. "Ah!" thought Triplet, "he means to quiz them, as well as expose me. He is hanging back; and, in point of fact, a mighty satirist like Snarl would naturally choose to quiz six people rather than two."

"Now, I call it beautiful!" said the traitor Soaper. "So calm and reposeful; no particular expression."

"None whatever," said Snarl.

"Gentlemen," said Triplet, "does it never occur to you that the fine arts are tender violets, and cannot blow when the north winds——"

"Blow!" inserted Quin.

"Are so cursed cutting?" continued Triplet.

"My good sir, I am never cutting!" smirked Soaper. "My dear Snarl," whined he, "give us the benefit of your practised judgment. Do justice to this ad-mirable work of art," drawled the traitor.

"I will!" said Mr. Snarl, and placed himself before the picture.

"What on earth will he say?" thought Triplet. "I can see by his face he has found us out."

Mr. Snarl delivered a short critique. Mr. Snarl's intelligence was not confined to his phrases; all critics use intelligent phrases and philosophical truths. But this gentleman's manner was very intelligent; it was pleasant, quiet, assured, and very convincing. Had the reader or I been there, he would have carried us with him, as he did his hearers, and as his successors carry the public with them now.

"Your brush is by no means destitute of talent, Mr. Triplet," said Mr. Snarl. "But you are somewhat deficient, at present, in the great principles of your art; the first of which is a loyal adherence to truth. Beauty itself is but one of the forms of truth, and nature is our finite exponent of infinite truth."

His auditors gave him a marked attention. They could not but acknowledge that men who go to the bottom of things like this should be the best instructors.

"Now, in nature, a woman's face at this distance—ay, even at this short distance—melts into the air. There is none of that sharpness, but, on the contrary, a softness of outline." He made a lorgnette of his two hands; the others did so too, and found they saw much better—oh, ever so much better! "Whereas, yours," resumed Snarl, "is hard; and, forgive me, rather tea-board-like. Then your *chiaro scuro*, my good sir, is very defective; for instance, in nature, the nose intercepting the light on one side the face, throws, of necessity, a shadow under the eye. Caravaggio, Venetians generally, and the Bolognese masters do particular justice to this. No such shade appears in this portrait."

"'Tis so, stop my vitals!" observed Colley Cibber. And they all looked, and having looked, wagged their heads in

assent—as the fat, white lords at Christie's waggle fifty pounds more out for a copy of Rembrandt, a brown levitical Dutchman, visible in the pitch dark by some sleight-of-sun Newton had not wit to discover.

Soaper dissented from the mass.

"But, my dear Snarl, if there are no shades, there are lights, loads of lights."

"There are," replied Snarl; "only they are impossible, that is all. You have, however," concluded he, with a manner slightly supercilious, "succeeded in the mechanical parts: the hair and the dress are well, Mr. Triplet; but *your* Woffington is not a woman, nor nature."

They all nodded and waggled assent; but this sagacious motion was arrested as by an earthquake.

The picture rang out, in the voice of a clarion, an answer that outlived the speaker: "She's a woman! for she has taken four men in! She's nature! for a fluent dunce doesn't know her when he sees her!"

Imagine the tableau! It was charming! Such opening of eyes and mouths! Cibber fell by second nature into an attitude of the old comedy. And all were rooted where they stood, with surprise and incipient mortification, except Quin, who slapped his knee and took the trick at its value.

Peg Woffington slipped out of the green baize, and coming round from the back of the late picture, stood in person before them; while they looked alternately at her and at the hole in the canvas. She then came at each of them in turn, *more dramatico.*

"A pretty face, and not like Woffington. I owe you two, Kate Clive."

"Who ever saw Peggy's real face? Look at it now if you can without blushing, Mr. Quin."

Quin, a good-humoured fellow, took the wisest view of his predicament, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"For all this," said Mr. Snarl peevishly, "I maintain, upon the unalterable principles of art——" At this they all burst into a roar, not sorry to shift the ridicule. "Goths!" cried Snarl fiercely. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen," cried Mr. Snarl, *avec intention,* "I have a criticism to write of last night's performance." The laugh died away to a quaver. "I shall sit on your pictures one day, Mr. Brush."

"Don't sit on them with your head downwards, or you'll addle them," said Mr. Brush fiercely. This was the first time Triplet had ever answered a foe. Mrs. Woffington gave

him an eloquent glance of encouragement. He nodded his head in infantine exultation at what he had done.

"Come, Soaper," said Mr. Snarl.

Mr. Soaper lingered one moment to say: "You shall always have my good word, Mr. Triplet."

"I will try—and not deserve it, Mr. Soaper," was the prompt reply.

"Serve 'em right," said Mr. Cibber as soon as the door had closed upon them, "for a couple of serpents, or rather one boa-constrictor. Soaper slavers, for Snarl to crush. But we were all a little too hard on Triplet here; and if he will accept my apology——"

"Why, sir," said Triplet, half trembling, but driven on by looks from Mrs. Woffington, "'Cibber's Apology' is found to be a trifle wearisome."

"Confound his impertinence!" cried the astounded Laureate. "Come along, Jemmy."

"Oh, sir!" said Quin good-humouredly, "we must give a joke and take a joke. And when he paints my portrait—which he shall do——"

"The bear from Hockley Hole shall sit for the head!"

"Curse his impudence!" roared Quin. "I'm at your service, Mr. Cibber," added he, in huge dudgeon.

Away went the two old boys.

"Mighty well!" said waspish Mrs. Clive. "I did intend you should have painted Mrs. Clive. But after this impertinence——"

"You will continue to do it yourself, ma'am!"

This was Triplet's hour of triumph. His exultation was undignified, and such as is said to precede a fall. He inquired gravely of Mrs. Woffington whether he had, or had not, shown a spirit; whether he had, or had not, fired into each a parting shot as they sheered off. To repair which, it might be advisable for them to put into friendly perts.

"Tremendous!" was the reply. "And when Snarl and Soaper sit on your next play, they won't forget the lesson you have given them."

"I'll be sworn they won't!" chuckled Triplet. But considering her words, he looked blank, and muttered: "Then, perhaps, it would have been more prudent to let them alone!"

"Incalculably more prudent!" was the reply.

"Then why did you set me on, madam?" said Triplet reproachfully.

"Because I wanted amusement, and my head ached," was the cool answer, somewhat languidly given.

"I defy the coxcombs!" cried Triplet, with reviving spirit. "But real criticism I respect, honour, and bow to. Such as yours, madam; or such as that sweet lady's at Mr. Vane's would have been; or, in fact, anybody's who appreciates me. Oh, madam! I wanted to ask you, was it not strange your not being at Mr. Vane's, after all, to-day?"

"I was at Mr. Vane's, Triplet."

"You were? Why, I came with my verses, and she said you were not there! I will go and fetch the verses."

"No, no! Who said I was not there?"

"Did I not tell you? The charming young lady who helped me with her own hand to everything on the table. What wine that gentleman possesses!"

"Was it a young lady, Triplet?"

"Not more than two-and-twenty, I should say."

"In a travelling-dress?"

"I could not see her dress, madam, for her beauty—brown hair, blue eyes, charming in conversation——"

"Ah! What did she tell you?"

"She told me, madam—ahem!"

"Well, what did you tell her? And what did she answer?"

"I told her that I came with verses for you, ordered by Mr. Vane. That he admired you. I descanted, madam, on your virtues, which had made him your slave."

"Go on," said Mrs. Woffington, encouraging him with a deceitful smile. "Tell me all you told her."

"That you were sitting to me for your portrait, the destination of which was not doubtful. That I lived at 10 Hercules Buildings."

"You told that lady all this?"

"I give you my honour. She was so kind, I opened my heart to her. But tell me now, madam," said Triplet, joyously dancing round the Woffington volcano, "do you know this charming lady?"

"Yes."

"I congratulate you, madam. An acquaintance worthy even of you; and there are not many such. Who is she, madam?" continued Triplet, lively with curiosity.

"Mrs Vane," was the quiet, grim answer.

"Mrs Vane? His mother? No—am I mad? His sister! Oh! I see, his——"

"His wife!"

"His wife! Why, then Mr. Vane's married?"

"Yes."

"Oh, look there!—oh, look here now! Well, but, good heavens! she wasn't to know you were there, perhaps?"

"No."

"But then, I let the cat out of the bag?"

"Yes."

"But, good gracious! there will be some serious mischief!"

"No doubt of it."

"And it is all my fault?"

"Yes."

"I've played the deuce with their married happiness?"

"Probably."

"And, ten to one, if you are not incensed against me too?"

Mrs. Woffington replied by looking him in the face and turning her back upon him. She walked hastily to the window, threw it open, and looked out of it, leaving poor Triplet to very unpleasant reflections. She was so angry with him she dared not trust herself to speak.

"Just my luck," thought he. "I had a patron and a benefactress—I have betrayed them both." Suddenly an idea struck him: "Madam," said he timorously, "see what these fine gentlemen are! What business had he, with a wife at home, to come and fall in love with you? I do it for ever in my plays—I am obliged—they would be so dull else; but in *real* life to do it is abominable."

"You forget, sir," replied Mrs. Woffington, without moving, "that I am an actress—a plaything for the impertinence of puppies and the treachery of hypocrites. Fool! to think there was an honest man in the world, and that he had shone on me!"

With these words she turned, and Triplet was shocked to see the change in her face. She was pale, and her black, lowering brows were gloomy and terrible. She walked like a tigress to and fro, and Triplet dared not speak to her; indeed, she seemed but half-conscious of his presence. He went for nobody with her. How little we know the people we eat and go to church and flirt with! Triplet had imagined this creature an incarnation of gaiety, a sportive being, the daughter of smiles, the bride of mirth; needed but a look at her now to see that her heart was a volcano, her bosom a boiling gulf of fiery lava. She walked like some wild creature; she flung her hands up to Heaven with a passionate despair, before which the feeble spirit of her companion shrank and cowered; and

with quivering lips and blazing eyes, she burst into a torrent of passionate bitterness.

"But who is Margaret Woffington," she cried, "that she should pretend to honest love, or feel insulted by the proffer of a stolen regard? And what have we to do with homes, or hearts, or firesides? Have we not the play-house, its paste diamonds, its paste feelings, and the loud applause of fops and sots—hearts?—beneath loads of tinsel and paint? Nonsense! The love that can go with souls to Heaven—such love for us? Nonsense! These men applaud us, cajole us, swear to us, flatter us; and yet, forsooth, we would have them respect us too!"

"My dear benefactress," said Triplet, "they are not worthy of you."

"I thought this man was not all dross; from the first I never felt his passion an insult. O Triplet! I could have loved this man—really loved him! and I longed so to be good. O God! O God!"

"Thank Heaven you don't love him!" cried Triplet hastily. "Thank Heaven for that!"

"Love him? Love a man who comes to me with a silly second-hand affection from his insipid baby-face, and offers me half, or two-thirds, or a third of his worthless heart? I hate him!—and her!—and all the world!"

"That is what I call a very proper feeling," said poor Triplet, with a weak attempt to soothe her. "Then break with him at once, and all will be well."

"Break with him? Are you mad? No! Since he plays with the tools of my trade, I shall fool him worse than he has me. I will feed his passion full, tempt him, torture him, play with him, as the angler plays a fish upon his hook. And when his very life depends on me, then by degrees he shall see me cool, and cool, and freeze into bitter aversion. Then he shall rue the hour he fought with the devil against my soul, and played false with a brain and heart like mine!"

"But his poor wife? You will have pity on her?"

"His wife! Are wives' hearts the only hearts that throb, and burn, and break? His wife must defend herself. It is not from me that mercy can come to her, nor from her to me. I loathe her, and I shall not forget that you took her part. Only if you are her friend, take my advice, don't you assist her. I shall defeat her without that. Let her fight *her* battle, and *I* mine."

"Ah, madam! she cannot fight; she is a dove."

"You are a fool! What do you know about women?

You were with her five minutes, and she turned you inside out. My life on it, whilst I have been fooling my time here, she is in the field, with all the arts of our sex, simplicity at the head of them."

Triplet was making a futile endeavour to convert her to his view of her rival when a knock suddenly came to his door. A slovenly girl, one of his own neighbours, brought him a bit of paper with a line written in pencil.

"'Tis from a lady, who waits below," said the girl.

Mrs. Woffington went again to the window, and there she saw getting out of a coach, and attended by James Burdock, Mabel Vane, who had sent up her name on the back of an old letter.

"What shall I do?" said Triplet as soon as he recovered the first stunning effects of this *contretemps*. To his astonishment, Mrs. Woffington bade the girl show the lady upstairs. The girl went down on this errand.

"But *you* are here," remonstrated Triplet. "Oh! to be sure, you can go into the other room. There is plenty of time to avoid her," said Triplet, in a very natural tremor. "This way, madam!"

Mrs. Woffington stood in the middle of the room like a statue.

"What does she come here for?" said she sternly. "You have not told me all."

"I don't know," cried poor Triplet in dismay, "and I think the devil brings her here to confound me. For Heaven's sake, retire! What will become of us all? There will be murder, I know there will!"

To his horror, Mrs. Woffington would not move. "You are on her side," said she slowly, with a concentration of spite and suspicion. She looked frightful at this moment. "All the better for me," added she, with a world of female malignity.

Triplet could not make head against this blow; he gasped, and pointed piteously to the inner door. "No; I will know two things: the course she means to take, and the terms you two are upon."

By this time Mrs. Vane's light foot was heard on the stair, and Triplet sank into a chair. "They will tear one another to pieces," said he.

A tap came to the door.

He looked fearfully round, for the woman whom jealousy had so speedily turned from an angel to a fiend, and saw, with dismay, that she had actually had the hardihood to slip round and enter the picture again. She had not quite arranged herself when her rival knocked.

Triplet dragged himself to the door. Before he opened it he looked fearfully over his shoulder, and received a glance of cool, bitter, deadly hostility, that boded ill both for him and his visitor. Triplet's apprehensions were not unreasonable. His benefactress and this sweet lady were rivals!

Jealousy is a dreadful passion; it makes us tigers. The jealous always thirst for blood. At any moment, when reason is a little weaker than usual, they are ready to kill the thing they hate or the thing they love.

Any open collision between these ladies would scatter ill consequences all round. Under such circumstances we are pretty sure to say or do something wicked, silly, or unreasonable. But what tortured Triplet more than anything was his own particular notion that fate doomed him to witness a formal encounter between these two women, and of course an encounter of such a nature as we in our day illustrate by "Kilkenny cats."

To be sure Mrs. Vane had appeared a dove, but doves can peck on certain occasions, and no doubt she had a spirit at bottom. Her coming to him proved it. And had not the other been a dove all the morning and afternoon? Yet jealousy had turned her to a fiend before his eyes. Then if (which was not probable) no collision took place, what a situation was his! Mrs. Woffington (his buckler from starvation) suspected him, and would distort every word that came from Mrs. Vane's lips.

Triplet's situation was, in fact, that of Æneas in the storm:

"Olim et hac meminisse juvabit;"

"But while present, such things don't please any one a bit."

It was the sort of situation we can laugh at, and see the fun of it, six months after, if not shipwrecked on it at the time.

With a ghastly smile the poor quaking hyprocrite welcomed Mrs. Vane, and professed a world of innocent delight that she had so honoured his humble roof.

She interrupted his compliments, and begged him to see whether she was followed by a gentleman in a cloak.

Triplet looked out of the window.

"Sir Charles Pomander!" gasped he.

Sir Charles was at the very door. If, however, he had intended to mount the stairs he changed his mind, for he suddenly went off round the corner with a business-like air, real or fictitious.

"He is gone, madam," said Triplit.

Mrs. Vane, the better to escape detection or observation, wore a thick mantle and a hood, that concealed her features. Of these Triplet debarrassed her.

"Sit down, madam," and he hastily drew a chair, so that her back was to the picture.

She was pale, and trembled a little. She hid her face in her hands a moment, then recovering her courage, she begged Mr. Triplet to pardon her for coming to him. "He had inspired her with confidence," she said; "he had offered her his services, and so she had come to him, for she had no other friend to aid her in her sore distress." She might have added that, with the tact of her sex, she had read Triplet to the bottom, and came to him as she would to a benevolent muscular old woman.

Triplet's natural impulse was to repeat most warmly his offers of service. He did so, and then, conscious of the picture, had a misgiving.

"Dear Mr. Triplet," began Mrs. Vane, "you know this person, Mrs. Woffington?"

"Yes, madam," replied Triplet, lowering his eyes, "I am honoured by her acquaintance."

"You will take me to the theatre where she acts?"

"Yes, madam: to the boxes, I presume?"

"No! oh no! How could I bear that? To the place where the actors and actresses are."

Triplet demurred. This would be courting that very collision the dread of which even now oppressed him.

At the first faint sign of resistance she began to supplicate him, as if he was some great stern tyrant.

"Oh, you must not, you cannot refuse me! You do not know what I risk to obtain this. I have risen from my bed to come to you. I have a fire here!" She pressed her hand to her brow. "Oh, take me to her!"

"Madam, I will do anything for you. But be advised; trust to my knowledge of human nature. What you require is madness. Gracious Heavens! you two are rivals, and when rivals meet there is murder or deadly mischief."

"Ah! if you knew my sorrow you would not thwart me. Oh, Mr. Triplet! little did I think you were as cruel as the rest." So then this cruel monster whimpered out that he should do any folly she insisted upon. "Good, kind Mr. Triplet!" said Mrs. Vane. "Let me look in your face. Yes, I see you are honest and true. I will tell you all." Then she poured in his ear her simple tale, unadorned and touching

as Judah's speech to Joseph. She told him how she loved her husband; how he had loved her; how happy they were for the first six months; how her heart sank when he left her; how he had promised she should join him, and on that hope she lived. "But for two months he had ceased to speak of this, and I grew heart-sick waiting for the summons that never came. At last I felt I should die if I did not see him; so I plucked up courage and wrote that I must come to him. He did not forbid me, so I left our country home. Oh, sir! I cannot make you know how my heart burned to be by his side. I counted the hours of the journey; I counted the miles. At last I reached his house; I found a gay company there. I was a little sorry, but I said: 'His friends shall be welcome, right welcome. He has asked them to welcome his wife.'"

"Poor thing!" muttered Triplet.

"Oh, Mr. Triplet! they were there to do honour to ——, and the wife was neither expected nor desired. There lay my letters with their seals unbroken. I know all *his* letters by heart, Mr. Triplet. The seals unbroken—unbroken! Mr. Triplet."

"It is abominable!" cried Triplet fiercely.

"And she who sat in my seat—in his house, and in his heart—was this lady, the actress you so praised to me!"

"That lady, ma'am," said Triplet, "has been deceived as well as you."

"I am convinced of it," said Mabel.

"And it is my painful duty to tell you, madam, that, with all her talents and sweetness, she has a fiery temper; yes, a very fiery temper," continued Triplet stoutly, though with an uneasy glance in a certain direction; "and I have reason to believe she is angry, and thinks more of her own ill-usage than yours. Don't you go near her. Trust to my knowledge of the sex, madam; I am a dramatic writer. Did you ever read the 'Rival Queens'?"

"No."

"I thought not. Well, madam, one stabs the other, and the one that is stabbed says things to the other that are more biting than steel. The prudent course for you is to keep apart, and be always cheerful, and welcome him with a smile —and—have you read 'The Way to Keep Him'?"

"No, Mr. Triplet," said Mabel firmly; "I cannot feign. Were I to attempt talent and deceit, I should be weaker than I am now. Honesty and right are all my strength. I will cry to her for justice and mercy. And if I cry in vain, I shall die, Mr. Triplet; that is all."

"Don't cry, dear lady," said Triplet, in a broken voice.

"It is impossible!" cried she suddenly. "I am not learned, but I can read faces. I always could, and so could my aunt Deborah before me. I read you right, Mr. Triplet, and I have read her too. Did not my heart warm to her amongst them all? There *is* a heart at the bottom of all her acting, and that heart is good and noble."

"She is, madam! she is! and charitable too. I know a family she saved from starvation and despair. Oh, yes! she has a heart—to feel for the *poor*, at all events."

"And am I not the poorest of the poor?" cried Mrs. Vane. "I have no father nor mother, Mr. Triplet; my husband is all I have in the world—all I *had*, I mean."

Triplet, deeply affected himself, stole a look at Mrs. Woffington. She was pale; but her face was composed into a sort of dogged obstinacy. He was disgusted with her. "Madam," said he sternly, "there is a wild beast more cruel and savage than wolves and bears; it is called 'a rival,' and don't you get in its way."

At this moment, in spite of Triplet's precaution, Mrs. Vane, casting her eye accidentally round, caught sight of the picture, and instantly started up, crying, "She is there!" Triplet was thunderstruck. "What a likeness!" cried she, and moved towards the supposed picture.

"Don't go to it!" cried Triplet, aghast; "the colour is wet."

She stopped; but her eye, and her very soul, dwelt upon the supposed picture; and Triplet stood quaking. "How like! It seems to breathe. You are a great painter, sir. A glass is not truer."

Triplet, hardly knowing what he said, muttered something about "critics and lights and shades."

"Then they are blind!" cried Mabel, never for a moment removing her eye from the object. "Tell me not of lights and shades. The pictures I see have a look of paint; but yours looks like life. Oh! that she were here, as this *wonderful* image of hers is! I would speak to her. I am not wise or learned; but orators never pleaded as I would plead to her for my Ernest's heart." Still her eye glanced upon the picture; and, I suppose, her heart realised an actual presence, though her judgment did not, for by some irresistible impulse she sank slowly down and stretched her clasped hands towards it, while sobs and words seemed to break direct from her bursting heart. "Oh, yes! you are beautiful, you are gifted, and the eyes of thousands wait upon your every

word and look. What wonder that he, ardent, refined, and genial, should lay his heart at your feet? And I have nothing but my love to make him love me. I cannot take him from you. Oh, be generous to the weak! Oh, give him back to me! What is one heart more to you? You are so rich, and I am so poor, that without his love I have nothing, and can do nothing but sit me down and cry till my heart breaks. Give him back to me, beautiful, terrible woman! for, with all your gifts, you cannot love him as his poor Mabel does; and I will love you longer perhaps than men can love. I will kiss your feet, and Heaven above will bless you; and I will bless you and pray for you to my dying day. Ah! it is alive! I am frightened! I am frightened!" She ran to Triplet and seized his arm. "No!" cried she, quivering close to him; "I'm not frightened, for it was for me she—oh, Mrs. Woffington!' and hiding her face on Mr. Triplet's shoulder, she blushed, and wept, and trembled.

What was it had betrayed Mrs. Woffington? *A tear!*

During the whole of this interview (which had taken a turn so unlooked for by the listener) she might have said with Beatrice, "What fire is in mine ears?" and what self-reproach and chill misgiving in her heart too! She had passed through a hundred emotions, as the young innocent wife told her sad and simple story. But anxious now above all things to escape without being recognised—for she had long repented having listened at all, or placed herself in her present position—she fiercely mastered her countenance; but though she ruled her features, she could not rule her heart. And when the young wife, instead of inveighing against her, came to her as a supplicant, with faith in her goodness, and sobbed to her for pity, a big tear rolled down her cheek, and proved her something more than a picture or an actress.

Mrs. Vane, as we have related, screamed and ran to Triplet.

Mrs. Woffington came instantly from her frame, and stood before them in a despairing attitude, with one hand upon her brow. For a single moment her impulse was to fly from the apartment, so ashamed was she of having listened, and of meeting her rival in this way; but she conquered this feeling, and as soon as she saw Mrs. Vane too had recovered some composure, she said to Triplet, in a low but firm voice—

"Leave us, sir. No living creature must hear what I say to this lady!"

Triplet remonstrated, but Mrs. Vane said faintly—

"Oh yes, good Mr. Triplet, I would rather you left me."

Triplet, full of misgivings, was obliged to retire.

"Be composed, ladies," said he piteously. "Neither of you could help it;" and so he entered his inner room, where he sat and listened nervously, for he could not shake off all apprehension of a personal encounter.

In the room he had left there was a long uneasy silence. Both ladies were greatly embarrassed. It was the actress who spoke first. All trace of emotion, except a certain pallor, was driven from her face. She spoke with very marked courtesy, but in tones that seemed to freeze as they dropped one by one from her mouth.

"I trust, madam, you will do me the justice to believe I did not know Mr. Vane was married?"

"I am sure of it!" said Mabel warmly. "I feel you are as good as you are gifted."

"Mrs. Vane, I am not!" said the other almost sternly. "You are deceived!"

"Then Heaven have mercy on me! No! I am not deceived; you pitied me. You speak coldly now; but I know your face and your heart—you pity me!"

"I do respect, admire, and pity you," said Mrs. Woffington sadly; "and I could consent never more to communicate with your—with Mr. Vane."

"Ah!" cried Mabel; "Heaven will bless you! But will you give me back his heart?"

"How can I do that?" said Mrs. Woffington uneasily; she had not bargained for this.

"The magnet can repel as well as attract. Can you not break your own spell? What will his presence be to me if his heart remain behind?"

"You ask much of me."

"Alas! I do."

"But I could do even this." She paused for breath. "And perhaps if you, who have not only touched my heart, but won my respect, were to say to me 'Do so,' I should do it." Again she paused, and spoke with difficulty; for the bitter struggle took away her breath. "Mr. Vane thinks better of me than I deserve. I have—only—to make him believe me—worthless—worse than I am—and he will drop me like an adder—and love you better, far better—for having known—admired—and despised Margaret Woffington."

"Oh!" cried Mabel, "I shall bless you every hour of my life." Her countenance brightened into rapture at the picture, and Mrs. Woffington's darkened with bitterness as she watched her.

But Mabel reflected. "Rob you of your good name?" said this pure creature. "Ah, Mabel Vane! you think but of yourself."

"I thank you, madam," said Mrs. Woffington, a little touched by this unexpected trait; "but some one must suffer here, and——"

Mabel Vane interrupted her. "This would be cruel and base," said she firmly. "No woman's forehead shall be soiled by me. Oh, madam! beauty is admired, talent is adored; but virtue is a woman's crown. With it, the poor are rich; without it, the rich are poor. It walks through life upright, and never hides its head for high or low."

Her face was as the face of an angel now; and the actress, conquered by her beauty and her goodness, actually bowed her head and gently kissed the hand of the country wife whom she had quizzed a few hours ago.

Frailty paid this homage to virtue!

Mabel Vane hardly noticed it; her eye was lifted to Heaven, and her heart was gone there for help in a sore struggle.

"This would be to assassinate you; no less. And so, madam," she sighed, "with God's help, I do refuse your offer, choosing rather, if needs be, to live desolate, but innocent—many a better than I hath lived so—ay! if God wills it, to die, with my hopes and my heart crushed, but my hands unstained; for so my humble life has passed."

How beautiful, great, and pure goodness is! It paints Heaven on the face that has it; it wakens the sleeping souls that meet it.

At the bottom of Margaret Woffington's heart lay a soul, unknown to the world, scarce known to herself—a heavenly harp, on which ill airs of passion had been played—but still it was there, in tune with all that is true, pure, really great and good. And now the flush that a great heart sends to the brow, to herald great actions, came to her cheek and brow.

"Humble!" she cried. "Such as you are the diamonds of our race. You angel of truth and goodness, you have conquered!"

"Oh, yes! yes! Thank God, yes!"

"What a fiend I must be could I injure you! The poor heart we have both overrated shall be yours again, and yours for ever. In my hands it is painted glass; in the lustre of a love like yours it may become a priceless jewel." She turned her head away and pondered a moment, then suddenly offered to Mrs. Vane her hand with nobleness and majesty: "Can

you trust me?" The actress too was divinely beautiful now, for her good angel shone through her.

"I could trust you with my life!" was the reply.

"Ah! if I might call you friend, dear lady, what would I not do—suffer—resign—to be worthy that title!"

"No, not friend!" cried the warm, innocent Mabel; "sister! I will call you sister. I have no sister."

"Sister!" said Mrs. Woffington. "Oh, do not mock me! Alas! you do not know what you say. That sacred name to me, from lips so pure as yours—Mrs. Vane," said she timidly, "would you think me presumptuous if I begged you to—to let me kiss you?"

The words were scarce spoken before Mrs. Vane's arms were wreathed round her neck, and that innocent cheek laid sweetly to hers.

Mrs. Woffington strained her to her bosom, and two great hearts, whose grandeur the world, worshipper of charlatans, never discovered, had found each other out and beat against each other. A great heart is as quick to find another out as the world is slow.

Mrs. Woffington burst into a passion of tears and clasped Mabel tighter and tighter, in a half-despairing way. Mabel mistook the cause, but she kissed her tears away.

"Dear sister," said she, "be comforted. I love you. My heart warmed to you the first moment I saw you. A woman's love and gratitude are something. Ah! you will never find me change. This is for life, look you."

"God grant it!" cried the other poor woman. "Oh, it is not that, it is not that; it is because I am so little worthy of this. It is a sin to deceive you. I am not good like you. You do not know me!"

"You do not know yourself if you say so!" cried Mabel; and to her hearer the words seemed to come from Heaven. "I read faces," said Mabel. "I read yours at sight, and you are what I set you down; and nobody must breathe a word against you, not even yourself. Do you think I am blind? You are beautiful, you are good, you are my sister, and I love you!"

"Heaven forgive me!" thought the other. "How can I resign this angel's good opinion? Surely Heaven sends this blessed dew to my parched heart!" And now she burned to make good her promise, and earn this virtuous wife's love. She folded her once more in her arms, and then taking her by the hand, led her tenderly into Triplet's inner room. She made her lie down on the bed, and placed pillows high for her

like a mother, and leaned over her as she lay and pressed her lips gently to her forehead. Her fertile brain had already digested a plan, but she had resolved that this pure and candid soul should take no lessons of deceit. "Lie there," said she, "till I open the door, and then join us. Do you know what I am going to do? I am not going to restore you your husband's heart, but to show you it never really left you. You read faces; well, I read circumstances. Matters are not as you thought," said she, with all a woman's tact. "I cannot explain, but you will see." She then gave Mrs. Triplet peremptory orders not to let her charge rise from the bed until the preconcerted signal.

Mrs. Vane was, in fact, so exhausted by all she had gone through that she was in no condition to resist. She cast a look of child-like confidence upon her rival, and then closed her eyes, and tried not to tremble all over and listen like a frightened hare.

It is one great characteristic of genius to do great things with little things. Paxton could see that so small a matter as a greenhouse could be dilated into a crystal palace, and with two common materials—glass and iron—he raised the palace of the genii; the brightest idea and the noblest ornament added to Europe in this century,—the koh-i-nor of the West. Livy's definition of Archimedes goes on the same ground.

Peg Woffington was a genius in her way. On entering Triplet's studio her eye fell upon three trifles—Mrs. Vane's hood and mantle, the back of an old letter, and Mr. Triplet. (It will be seen how she worked these slight materials.) On the letter was written, in pencil, simply these two words, "Mabel Vane." Mrs. Woffington wrote above these words two more, "Alone and unprotected." She put this into Mr. Triplet's hand, and bade him take it downstairs and give it to Sir Charles Pomander, whose retreat, she knew, must have been fictitious. "You will find him round the corner," said she, "or in some shop that looks this way." Whilst uttering these words she had put on Mrs. Vane's hood and mantle.

No answer was returned, and no Triplet went out of the door.

She turned, and there he was kneeling on both knees close under her.

"Bid me jump out of that window, madam; bid me kill those two gentlemen, and I will not rebel. You are a great lady, a talented lady; you have been insulted, and no doubt blood will flow. It ought—it is your due; but that innocent lady, do not compromise her!"

"Oh, Mr. Triplet, you need not kneel to me. I do not wish to force you to render me a service. I have no right to dictate to you."

"Oh dear!" cried Triplet, "don't talk in that way. I owe you my life, but I think of your own peace of mind, for you are not one to be happy if you injure the innocent!" He rose suddenly, and cried: "Madam, promise me not to stir till I come back!"

"Where are you going?"

"To bring the husband to his wife's feet, and so save one angel from despair and another angel from a great crime."

"Well, I suppose you are wiser than I," said she. "But if you are in earnest, you had better be quick, for somehow I am rather changeable about these people."

"You can't help that, madam; it is your sex. You are an angel. May I be permitted to kiss your hand? You are all goodness and gentleness at bottom. I fly to Mr. Vane, and we will be back before you have time to repent and give the devil the upper hand again, my dear, good, sweet lady!"

Away flew Triplet, all unconscious that he was not Mrs. Woffington's opponent, but puppet. He ran, he tore, animated by a good action, and spurred by the notion that he was in direct competition with the fiend for the possession of his benefactress.

He had no sooner turned the corner than Mrs. Woffington, looking out of the window, observed Sir Charles Pomander on the watch, as she had expected. She remained at the window with Mrs. Vane's hood on until Sir Charles's eye, in its wanderings, lighted on her, and then dropping Mrs. Vane's letter from the window, she hastily withdrew.

Sir Charles eagerly picked it up. His eye brightened when he read the short contents. With a self-satisfied smile he mounted the stair. He found in Triplet's house a lady, who seemed startled at her late hardihood. She sat with her back to the door, her hood drawn tightly down, and wore an air of trembling consciousness. Sir Charles smiled again. He knew the sex; at least he said so. (It is an assertion often ventured upon.) Accordingly Sir Charles determined to come down from his height and court nature and innocence in their own

tones. This, he rightly judged, must be the proper course to take with Mrs. Vane. He fell down with mock ardour upon one knee.

The supposed Mrs. Vane gave a little squeak.

"Dear Mrs. Vane," cried he, "be not alarmed; loveliness neglected and simplicity deceived ensure respect as well as adoration. Ah!" (a sigh).

"Oh, get up, sir; do, please! Ah!" (a sigh).

"You sigh, sweetest of human creatures. Ah! why did not a nature like yours fall into hands that would have cherished it as it deserves? Had Heaven bestowed on me this hand, which I take——"

"Oh, please, sir——"

"With the profoundest respect, would I have abandoned such a treasure for an actress?—a Woffington! as artificial and hollow a jade as ever winked at a side-box!"

"Is she, sir?"

"Notorious, madam. Your husband is the only man in London who does not see through her. How different are you! Even I, who have no taste for actresses, found myself revived, refreshed, ameliorated by that engaging picture of innocence and virtue you drew this morning; yourself the bright and central figure. Ah, dear angel! I remember all your favourites, and envy them their place in your recollections. Your Barbary mare——"

"Hen, sir!"

"Of course I meant hen; and Grey Gillian, his old nurse——"

"No, no, no! she is the mare, sir. He! he! he!"

"So she is. And Dame—Dame——"

"Best!"

"Ah! I knew it. You see how I remember them all. And all carry me back to those innocent days which fleet too soon—days when an angel like you might have weaned me from the wicked pleasures of the town, to the placid delights of a rural existence!"

"Alas, sir!"

"You sigh. It is not yet too late. I am a convert to you; I swear it on this white hand. Ah! how can I relinquish it, pretty fluttering prisoner?"

"Oh, sir, please——"

"Stay a while."

"No! please, sir——"

"While I fetter thee with a worthy manacle." Sir Charles slipped a diamond ring of great value upon his pretty prisoner.

"La, sir, how pretty!" cried innocence.

Sir Charles then undertook to prove that the lustre of the ring was faint, compared with that of the present wearer's eyes. This did not suit innocence; she hung her head and fluttered, and showed a bashful repugnance to look her admirer in the face. Sir Charles playfully insisted, and Mrs. Woffington was beginning to be a little at a loss, when suddenly voices were heard upon the stairs.

"*My husband!*" cried the false Mrs. Vane, and in a moment she rose and darted into Triplet's inner apartment.

Mr. Vane and Mr. Triplet were talking earnestly as they came up the stair. It seems the wise Triplet had prepared a little dramatic scene for his own refreshment, as well as for the ultimate benefit of all parties. He had persuaded Mr. Vane to accompany him by warm, mysterious promises of a happy *dénouement;* and now, having conducted that gentleman as far as his door, he was heard to say—

"And now, sir, you shall see one who waits to forget grief, suspicion—all, in your arms. Behold!" and here he flung the door open.

"The devil!"

"You flatter me!" said Pomander, who had had time to recover his *aplomb,* somewhat shaken, at first, by Mr. Vane's inopportune arrival.

Now it is to be observed that Mr. Vane had not long ago seen his wife lying on her bed, to all appearance incapable of motion.

Mr. Vane, before Triplet could recover his surprise, inquired of Pomander why he had sent for him. "And what," added he, "is the grief—suspicion, I am, according to Mr. Triplet, to forget in your arms?"

Mr. Vane added this last sentence in rather a testy manner.

"Why, the fact is——" began Sir Charles, without the remotest idea of what the fact was going to be.

"That Sir Charles Pomander——" interrupted Triplet.

"But Mr. Triplet is going to explain," said Sir Charles keenly.

"Nay, sir; be yours the pleasing duty. But, now I think of it," resumed Triplet, "why not tell the simple truth?—it is not a play! She I brought you here to see was not Sir Charles Pomander; but——"

"I forbid you to complete the name!" cried Pomander.

"I command you to complete the name!" cried Vane.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! how can I do both?" remonstrated Triplet.

"Enough, sir!" cried Pomander. "It is a lady's secret. I am the guardian of that lady's honour."

"She has chosen a strange guardian of her honour!" said Vane bitterly.

"Gentlemen," cried poor Triplet, who did not at all like the turn things were taking, "I give you my word she does not even know of Sir Charles's presence here!"

"Who?" cried Vane furiously. "Man alive! who are you speaking of?"

"Mrs. Vane!"

"My wife!" cried Vane, trembling with anger and jealousy. "She here!—and with this man?"

"No!" cried Triplet. "With me, with me! Not with him, of course."

"Boaster!" cried Vane contemptuously. "But that is a part of your profession!"

Pomander, irritated, scornfully drew from his pocket the ladies' joint production, which had fallen at his feet from Mrs. Woffington's hand. He presented this to Mr. Vane, who took it very uneasily. A mist swam before his eyes as he read the words, "Alone and unprotected.—MABEL VANE." He had no sooner read these words than he found he loved his wife: when he tampered with his treasure, he did not calculate on another seeking it.

This was Pomander's hour of triumph! He proceeded coolly to explain to Mr. Vane that Mrs. Woffington having deserted him for Mr. Vane, and Mr. Vane his wife for Mrs. Woffington, the bereaved parties had, according to custom, agreed to console each other.

This soothing little speech was interrupted by Mr. Vane's sword flashing suddenly out of its sheath; while that gentleman, white with rage and jealousy, bade him instantly take to his guard, or be run through the body like some noxious animal.

Sir Charles drew his sword, and, in spite of Triplet's weak interference, half-a-dozen passes were rapidly exchanged, when suddenly the door of the inner room opened, and a lady in a hood pronounced, in a voice which was an excellent imitation of Mrs. Vane's, the word "False!"

The combatants lowered their points.

"You hear, sir!" cried Triplet.

"You see, sir!" said Pomander.

"Mabel!—wife!" cried Mr. Vane in agony. "Oh! say this is not true!—oh! say that letter is a forgery! Say, at least,

it was by some treachery you were lured to this den of iniquity! Oh! speak!"

The lady silently beckoned to some person inside.

"You know I loved you!—you know how bitterly I repent the infatuation that brought me to the feet of another!"

The lady replied not, though Vane's soul appeared to hang upon her answer. But she threw the door open, and there appeared another lady, the real Mrs. Vane! Mrs. Woffington then threw off her hood, and, to Sir Charles Pomander's consternation, revealed the features of that ingenious person, who seemed born to outwit him.

"You heard that fervent declaration, madam?" said she to Mrs. Vane. "I present to you, madam, a gentleman who regrets that he mistook the real direction of his feelings. And to you, sir," continued she, with great dignity, "I present a lady who will never mistake either her feelings or her duty."

"Ernest! dear Ernest!" cried Mrs. Vane, blushing, as if she was the culprit. And she came forward, all love and tenderness.

Her truant husband kneeled at her feet of course. "No!" he said rather sternly, "how came you here, Mabel?"

"Mrs. Vane," said the actress, "fancied you had mislaid that weather-cock, your heart, in Covent Garden, and that an actress had seen in it a fit companion for her own, and had feloniously appropriated it. She came to me to inquire after it."

"But this letter, signed by you?" said Vane, still addressing Mabel.

"Was written by me on a paper which accidentally contained Mrs. Vane's name. The fact is, Mr. Vane—I can hardly look you in the face—I had a little wager with Sir Charles here; his diamond ring—which you may see has become my diamond ring"—a horrible wry face from Sir Charles—"against my left glove, that I could bewitch a country gentleman's imagination, and make him think me an angel. Unfortunately the owner of his heart appeared, and, like poor Mr. Vane, took our play for earnest. It became necessary to disabuse her and to open your eyes. Have I done so?"

"You have, madam," said Vane, wincing at each word she said. But at last, by a mighty effort, he mastered himself, and coming to Mrs. Woffington with a quivering lip, he held out his hand suddenly in a very manly way. "I have been the dupe of my own vanity," said he, "and I thank you for this lesson." Poor Mrs. Woffington's fortitude had well-nigh left her at this.

"Mabel," he cried, "is this humiliation any punishment for my folly?—any guarantee for my repentance? Can you forgive me?"

"It is all forgiven, Ernest. But, oh! you are mistaken." She glided to Mrs. Woffington. "What do we not owe you, sister?" whispered she.

"Nothing! that word pays all," was the reply. She then slipped her address into Mrs. Vane's hand, and curtseying to all the company, she hastily left the room.

Sir Charles Pomander followed; but he was not quick enough; she got a start, and purposely avoided him, and for three days neither the public nor private friends saw this poor woman's face.

Mr. and Mrs. Vane prepared to go also; but Mrs. Vane would thank good Mr. Triplet and Mrs. Triplet for their kindness to her.

Triplet the benevolent blushed, was confused and delighted; but suddenly turning somewhat sorrowful, he said: "Mr. Vane, madam, made use of an expression which caused a momentary pang. He called this a den of iniquity. Now this is my studio! But never mind."

Mr. Vane asked his pardon for so absurd an error, and the pair left Triplet in all the enjoyment which does come now and then to an honest man, whether this dirty little world will or not.

A coach was called, and they went home to Bloomsbury. Few words were said; but the repentant husband often silently pressed this angel to his bosom, and the tears which found their way to her beautiful eyelashes were tears of joy.

This weakish, and consequently villainous, though not ill-disposed person would have gone down to Willoughby that night; but his wife had great good sense. She would not take her husband off, like a schoolboy caught out of bounds. She begged him to stay while she made certain purchases; but for all that her heart burned to be at home. So in less than a week after the events we have related they left London.

Meantime every day Mrs. Vane paid a quiet visit to Mrs. Woffington (for some days the actress admitted no other visitor), and was with her but two hours before she left London. On that occasion she found her very sad.

"I shall never see you again in this world," said she; "but I beg of you to write to me, that my mind may be in contact with yours."

She then asked Mabel, in her half-sorrowful, half-bitter way, how many months it would be ere she was forgotten.

Mabel answered by quietly crying. So then they embraced; and Mabel assured her friend she was not one of those who change their minds. "It is for life, dear sister; it is for life," cried she.

"Swear this to me," said the other, almost sternly. "But no. I have more confidence in that candid face and pure nature than in a human being's oath. If you are happy, remember you owe me something. If you are unhappy, come to me, and I will love you as men cannot love."

Then vows passed between them, for a singular tie bound these two women; and then the actress showed a part at least of her sore heart to her new sister; and that sister was surprised and grieved, and pitied her truly and deeply, and they wept on each other's neck; and at last they were fain to part. They parted; and true it was they never met again in this world. They parted in sorrow; but when they meet again it shall be with joy.

Women are generally such faithless, unscrupulous, and pitiless humbugs in their dealings with their own sex—which, whatever they may say, they despise at heart—that I am happy to be able to say Mrs. Vane proved true as steel. She was a noble-minded, simple-minded creature; she was also a constant creature. Constancy is a rare, a beautiful, a godlike virtue.

Four times every year she wrote a long letter to Mrs. Woffington; and twice a year, in the cold weather, she sent her a hamper of country delicacies that would have victualled a small garrison. And when her sister left this earthly scene —a humble, pious, long-repentant Christian—Mrs. Vane wore mourning for her, and sorrowed over her; but not as those who cannot hope to meet again.

My story as a work of art—good, bad, or indifferent—ends with that last sentence. If a reader accompanies me further, I shall feel flattered, and he does so at his own risk.

My reader knows that all this befell long ago; that Woffington is gay, and Triplet sad, no more; that Mabel's and all the bright eyes of that day have long been dim, and all its cunning voices hushed. Judge then whether I am one of those happy story-tellers who can end with a wedding. No! this story must wind up, as yours and mine must—to-morrow —or to-morrow—or to-morrow! when our little sand is run.

Sir Charles Pomander lived a man of pleasure until sixty.

He then became a man of pain; he dragged the chain about eight years, and died miserably.

Mr. Cibber not so much died as "slipped his wind"—a nautical expression, that conveys the idea of an easy exit. He went off quiet and genteel. He was past eighty, and had lived fast. His servant called him at seven in the morning. "I will shave at eight," said Mr. Cibber. John brought the hot water at eight; but his master had taken advantage of this interval in his toilette to die!—to avoid shaving?

Snarl and Soaper conducted the criticism of their day with credit and respectability until a good old age, and died placidly a natural death like twaddle, sweet or sour.

The Triplets, while their patroness lived, did pretty well. She got a tragedy of his accepted at her theatre. She made him send her a copy, and with her scissors cut out about half; sometimes thinning, sometimes cutting bodily away. But, lo! the inherent vanity of Mr. Triplet came out strong. Submissively, but obstinately, he fought for the discarded beauties. Unluckily, he did this one day that his patroness was in one of her bitter humours. So she instantly gave him back his manuscript, with a sweet smile owned herself inferior in judgment to him, and left him unmolested.

Triplet breathed freely; a weight was taken off him. The savage steel (he applied this title to the actress's scissors) had spared his *purpurei panni*. He was played pure and intact, a calamity the rest of us, grumbling, escape.

But it did so happen that the audience were of the actress's mind, and found the words too exuberant, and the business of the play too scanty in proportion. At last their patience was so sorely tried that they supplied one striking incident to a piece deficient in facts. They gave the manager the usual broad hint, and in the middle of Triplet's third act a huge veil of green baize descended upon "The Jealous Spaniard."

Failing here, Mrs. Woffington contrived often to befriend him in his other arts, and, moreover, she often sent Mr. Triplet, what she called a snug investment, a loan of ten pounds, to be repaid at Doomsday, with interest and compound interest, according to the Scriptures; and although she laughed, she secretly believed she was to get her ten pounds back, double and treble. And I believe so too.

Some years later Mrs. Triplet became eventful. She fell ill, and lay a-dying; but one fine morning, after all hope had been given up, she suddenly rose and dressed herself. She was quite well in body now, but insane.

She continued in this state a month, and then by God's mercy she recovered her reason; but now the disease fell another step, and lighted upon her temper—a more athletic vixen was not to be found. She had spoiled Triplet for this by being too tame, so when the dispensation came they sparred daily. They were now thoroughly unhappy. They were poor as ever, and their benefactress was dead, and they had learned to snap. A speculative tour had taken this pair to Bristol, then the second city in England. They sojourned in the suburbs.

One morning the postman brought a letter for Triplet, who was showing his landlord's boy how to plant onions. (*N.B.*—Triplet had never planted an onion, but he was one of your *à priori* gentlemen, and could show anybody how to do anything.) Triplet held out his hand for the letter, but the postman held out his hand for half-a-crown first. Trip's profession had transpired, and his clothes inspired diffidence. Triplet appealed to his good feeling.

He replied with exultation, "That he had none left." (A middle-aged postman, no doubt.)

Triplet then suddenly started from entreaty to King Cambyses' vein. In vain!

Mrs. Triplet came down, and essayed the blandishments of the softer sex. In vain! And as there were no assets, the postman marched off down the road.

Mrs. Triplet glided after him like an assassin, beckoning on Triplet, who followed, doubtful of her designs. Suddenly (truth compels me to relate this) she seized the obdurate official from behind, pinned both his arms to his side, and with her nose furiously telegraphed her husband.

He, animated by her example, plunged upon the man and tore the letter from his hand, and opened it before his eyes.

It happened to be a very windy morning, and when he opened the letter an enclosure, printed on much finer paper, was caught into the air and went down the wind. Triplet followed in kangaroo leaps, like a dancer making a flying exit.

The postman cried on all good citizens for help. Some collected and laughed at him, Mrs. Triplet explaining that they were poor, and could not pay half-a-crown for the freight of half-an-ounce of paper. She held him convulsively until Triplet reappeared.

That gentleman on his return was ostentatiously calm and dignified. "You are, or were, in perturbation about half-a-crown," said he. "There, sir, is a twenty-pound note; oblige

me with nineteen pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence. Should your resources be unequal to such a demand, meet me at the 'Green Cat and Brown Frogs' after dinner, when you shall receive your half-crown, and drink another upon the occasion of my sudden accession to unbounded affluence."

The postman was staggered by the sentence and overawed by the note, and chose the "Cat and Frogs" and liquid half-crown.

Triplet took his wife down the road and showed her the letter and enclosure. The letter ran thus:

"SIR,—We beg respectfully to inform you that our late friend and client, James Triplet, Merchant, of the Minories, died last August, without a will, and that you are his heir.

"His property amounts to about twenty thousand pounds, besides some reversions. Having possessed the confidence of your late uncle, we should feel honoured and gratified if you should think us worthy to act professionally for yourself.

"We enclose twenty pounds, and beg you will draw upon us as far as five thousands pounds, should you have immediate occasion.—We are, Sir, your humble servants,

"JAMES AND JOHN ALLMITT."

It was some time before these children of misfortune could realise this enormous stroke of compensation; but at last it worked its way into their spirits, and they began to sing, to triumph, and dance upon the king's highway.

Mrs. Triplet was the first to pause, and take better views.

"Oh, James!" she cried, "we have suffered much! We have been poor but honest, and the Almighty has looked upon us at last!"

Then they began to reproach themselves.

"Oh, James! I have been a peevish woman—an ill wife to you, this many years!"

"No, no!" cried Triplet, with tears in his eyes. "It is I who have been rough and brutal. Poverty tried us too hard; but we were not like the rest of them—we were always faithful to the altar. And the Almighty has seen us, though we often doubted it."

"I never doubted that, James."

So then the poor things fell on their knees upon the public road and thanked God. If any man had seen them he would have said they were mad. Yet madder things are done every day, by gentlemen with faces as grave as the parish bull's. And then they rose and formed their little plans.

Triplet was for devoting four-fifths to charity, and living like a prince on the remainder. But Mrs. Triplet thought the poor were entitled to no more than two-thirds, and they themselves ought to bask in a third, to make up for what they had gone through; and then suddenly she sighed and burst into tears. "Lucy! Lucy!" sobbed she.

Yes, reader, God had taken little Lucy! And her mother cried to think all this wealth and comfort had come too late for her darling child.

"Do not cry. Lucy is richer, a thousand times, than you are, with your twenty thousand pounds."

Their good resolutions were carried out, for a wonder. Triplet lived for years, the benefactor of all the loose fish that swim in and round theatres; and indeed the unfortunate seldom appealed to him in vain. He now predominated over the arts, instead of climbing them. In his latter day he became an oracle, as far as the science of acting was concerned; and, what is far more rare, he really got to know *something* about it. This was owing to two circumstances: first, he ceased to run blindfold in a groove behind the scenes; second, he became a frequenter of the first row of the pit, and that is where the whole critic and two-thirds of the true actor is made.

On one point, to his dying day, his feelings guided his judgment. He never could see an actress equal to his Woffington. "Mrs. Abington was grace personified, but so was Woffington," said the old man. "And Abington's voice is thin; Woffington's was sweet and mellow." When Jordan rose, with her voice of honey, her dewy freshness, and her heavenly laugh, that melted in along with her words, like the gold in the quartz, Triplet was obliged to own her the goddess of beautiful gaiety; but still he had the last word: "Woffington was all *she* is, except her figure. Woffington was a Hebe—your Nell Jordan is little better than a dowdy."

Triplet almost reached the present century. He passed through great events, but they did not excite him; his eye was upon the arts. When Napoleon drew his conquering sword on England, Triplet's remark was: "Now we shall be driven upon native talent, thank Heaven!" The storms of Europe shook not Triplet. The fact is, nothing that happened on the great stage of the world seemed real to him. He believed in nothing, where there was no curtain visible. But even the grotesque are not good in vain. Many an eye was wet round his dying bed, and many a tear fell upon his grave. He made his final exit in the year of grace 1799. And I, who

laugh at him, would leave this world to-day to be with him; for I am tossing at sea—he is in port.

A straightforward character like Mabel's becomes a firm character with years. Long ere she was forty her hand gently but steadily ruled Willoughby House—and all in it. She and Mr. Vane lived very happily; he gave her no fresh cause for uneasiness. Six months after their return she told him what burned in that honest heart of hers, the truth about Mrs. Woffington. The water rushed to his eyes, but his heart was now wholly his wife's, and gratitude to Mrs. Woffington for her noble conduct was the only sentiment awakened.

"You must repay her, dearest," said he. "I know you love her, and until to-day it gave me pain; now it gives me pleasure. We owe her much."

The happy innocent life of Mabel Vane is soon summed up. Frank as the day, constant as the sun, pure as the dew, she passed the golden years preparing herself and others for a still brighter eternity. At home, it was she who warmed and cheered the house and the hearth more than all the Christmas fires. Abroad, she shone upon the poor like the sun. She led her beloved husband by the hand to heaven. She led her children the same road; and she was leading her grandchildren when the angel of death came for her; and she slept in peace.

Many remember her. For she alone, of all our tale, lived in this present century; but they speak of her as "old Madam Vane," her whom we knew so young and fresh.

She lies in Willoughby Church—her mortal part; her spirit is with the spirits of our mothers and sisters, reader, that are gone before us; with the tender mothers, the chaste wives, the loyal friends, and the just women of all ages.

RESURGET.

I come to her last who went first; but I could not have stayed by the others when once I had laid my darling asleep. It seemed for a while as if the events of our tale did her harm; but it was not so in the end.

Not many years afterwards she was engaged by Mr. Sheridan, at a very heavy salary, and went to Dublin. Here the little girl who had often carried a pitcher on her head down to

the Liffey and had played Polly Peachum in a booth became a lion, dramatic, political, and literary, and the centre of the wit of that wittiest of cities.

But the Dublin ladies and she did not coalesce. They said she was a naughty woman, and not fit for them morally. She said they had but two topics, "silks and scandal," and were unfit for her intellectually.

This was the saddest part of her history. But it is darkest just before sunrise. She returned to London. Not long after it so happened that she went to a small church in the city one Sunday afternoon. The preacher was such as we have often heard; but not so this poor woman, in her day of sapless theology, ere John Wesley waked the snoring church. Instead of sending a dry clatter of morality about their ears, or evaporating the Bible in the thin generalities of the pulpit, this man drove God's truths home to the hearts of men and women. In his hands the divine virtues were thunderbolts, not swans' down. With good sense, plain speaking, and a heart yearning for the souls of his brethren and his sisters, he stormed the bosoms of many; and this afternoon, as he reasoned like Paul of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, sinners trembled—and Margaret Woffington was of those who trembled.

After this day she came ever to the narrow street where shone this house of God; and still new light burst upon her heart and conscience. Here she learned why she was unhappy; here she learned how alone she could be happy; here she learned to know herself; and the moment she knew herself she abhorred herself, and repented in dust and ashes.

This strong and straightforward character made no attempt to reconcile two things that an average Christian would have continued to reconcile. Her interest fell in a moment before her new sense of right. She flung her profession from her like a poisonous weed.

Long before this, Mrs. Vane had begged her to leave the stage. She had replied, that it was to her what wine is to weak stomachs. "But," added she, "do not fear that I ever will crawl downhill and unravel my own reputation; nor will I ever do as I have seen others—stand groaning at the wing, to go on giggling and come off gasping. No! the first night the boards do not spring beneath my feet and the pulse of the public beat under my hand I am gone! Next day, at rehearsal, instead of Woffington, a note will come to tell the manager that henceforth Woffington is herself—at

Twickenham, or Richmond, or Harrow-on-the-Hill—far from his dust, his din, and his glare—quiet, till God takes her: amidst grass, and flowers, and charitable deeds."

This day had not come: it was in the zenith of her charms and her fame that she went home one night, after a play, and never entered a theatre, by front-door or back-door, again. She declined all leave-taking and ceremony.

"When a publican shuts up shop and ceases to diffuse liquid poison, he does not invite the world to put up the shutters; neither will I. Actors overrate themselves ridiculously," added she; "I am not of that importance to the world, nor the world to me. I fling away a dirty old glove instead of soiling my fingers filling it with more guineas, and the world loses in me, what?—another old glove, full of words; half of them idle, the rest wicked, untrue, silly, or impure. *Rougissons, taisons-nous, et partons.*"

She now changed her residence, and withdrew politely from her old associates, courting two classes only, the good and the poor. She had always supported her mother and sister; but now charity became her system. The following is characteristic:

A gentleman who had greatly admired this dashing actress met one day, in the suburbs, a lady in an old black silk gown and a grey shawl, with a large basket on her arm. She showed him its contents—worsted stockings of prodigious thickness—which she was carrying to some of her *protégés*.

"But surely that is a waste of your valuable time," remonstrated her admirer. "Much better buy them."

"But, my good soul," replied the representative of Sir Harry Wildair, "you can't buy them. Nobody in this wretched town can knit worsted hose except Woffington."

Conversions like this are open to just suspicion, and some did not fail to confound her with certain great sinners, who have turned austere self-deceivers when sin smiled no more. But this was mere conjecture. The facts were clear, and speaking to the contrary. This woman left folly at its brightest, and did not become austere; on the contrary, though she laughed less, she was observed to smile far oftener than before. She was a humble and penitent, but cheerful, hopeful Christian.

Another class of detractors took a somewhat opposite ground: they accused her of bigotry for advising a young female friend against the stage as a business. But let us hear herself. This is what she said to the girl—

"At the bottom of my heart, I always loved and honoured virtue. Yet the tendencies of the stage so completely overcame

my good sentiments that I was for years a worthless woman. It is a situation of uncommon and incessant temptation. Ask yourself, my child, whether there is nothing else you can do but this. It is, I think, our duty and our wisdom to fly temptation whenever we can, as it is to resist it when we cannot escape it."

Was this the tone of bigotry?

Easy in fortune, penitent, but cheerful, Mrs. Woffington had now but one care—to efface the memory of her former self, and to give as many years to purity and piety as had gone to folly and frailty. This was not to be! The Almighty did not permit, or perhaps I should say did not require this.

Some unpleasant symptoms had long attracted her notice, but in the bustle of her profession had received little attention. She was now persuaded by her own medical attendant to consult Dr. Bowdler, who had a great reputation, and had been years ago an acquaintance and an admirer. He visited her; he examined her by means little used in that day, and he saw at once that her days were numbered.

Dr. Bowdler's profession and experience had not steeled his heart as they generally do and must do. He could not tell her this sad news, so he asked her for pen and paper, and said: "I will write a prescription to Mr. ——." He then wrote, not a prescription, but a few lines begging Mr. —— to convey the cruel intelligence by degrees, and with care and tenderness. "It is all we can do for her," said he.

He looked so grave while writing the supposed prescription that it unluckily occurred to Mrs. Woffington to look over him. She stole archly behind him, and, with a smile on her face—read her death-warrant.

It was a cruel stroke! A gasping sigh broke from her. At this Dr. Bowdler looked up, and, to his horror, saw the sweet face he had doomed to the tomb looking earnestly and anxiously at him, and very pale and grave. He was shocked, and, strange to say, she, whose death-warrant he had signed, ran and brought him a glass of wine, for he was quite overcome. Then she gave him her hand in her own sweet way, and bade him not grieve for her, for she was not afraid to die, and had long learned that "life is a walking shadow, a poor poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more."

But no sooner was the doctor gone than she wept bitterly. Poor soul! she had set her heart upon living as many years to God as she had to the world, and she had hoped to wipe out her former self.

"Alas!" she said to her sister, "I have done more harm than I can ever hope to do good now; and my long life of folly and wickedness will be remembered—will be what they call famous; my short life of repentance who will know, or heed, or take to profit?"

But she soon ceased to repine. She bowed to the will of Heaven, and set her house in order, and awaited her summons, The tranquillity of her life and her courageous spirit were unfavourable to the progress of disease, and I am glad to say she was permitted to live nearly three years after this, and these three years were the happiest period of her whole life. Works of piety and love made the days eventful. She was at home now—she had never been at home in folly and loose living. All her bitterness was gone now, with its cause.

Reader, it was with her as it is with many an autumn day: clouds darken the sun, rain and wind sweep over all—till day declines. But then comes one heavenly hour, when all ill things seem spent. There is no more wind, no more rain. The great sun comes forth—not fiery bright indeed, but full of tranquil glory, and warms the sky with ruby waves, and the hearts of men with hope, as, parting with us for a little space, he glides slowly and peacefully to rest.

So fared it with this humble, penitent, and now happy Christian.

A part of her desire was given her. She lived long enough to read a firm recantation of her former self, to show the world a great repentance, and to leave upon indelible record one more proof what alone is true wisdom and where alone true joys are to be found.

She endured some physical pain, as all must who die in their prime. But this never wrung a sigh from her great heart; and within she had the peace of God, which passes all understanding.

I am not strong enough to follow her to her last hour; nor is it needed. Enough that her own words came true. When the great summons came, it found her full of hope, and peace, and joy; sojourning, not dwelling, upon earth; far from dust, and din, and vice; the Bible in her hand, the Cross in her heart; quiet; amidst grass, and flowers, and charitable deeds.

"NON OMNEM MORITURAM."

CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE

I DEDICATE

All that is good in this Work

to

MY MOTHER

C. R.

CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE

CHAPTER I

Viscount Ipsden, aged twenty-five, income eighteen thousand pounds per year, constitution equine, was unhappy! This might surprise some people; but there are certain blessings the non-possession of which makes more people discontented than their possession renders happy.

Foremost among these are "Wealth and Rank;" were I to add "Beauty" to the list, such men and women as go by fact, not by conjecture, would hardly contradict me.

The fortunate man is he who, born poor, or nobody, works gradually up to wealth and consideration, and having got them, dies before he finds they were not worth so much trouble.

Lord Ipsden started with nothing to win; and naturally lived for amusement. Now nothing is so sure to cease to please, as pleasure,—to amuse, as amusement: unfortunately for himself he could not at this period of his life warm to politics; so, having exhausted his London clique, he rolled through the cities of Europe in his carriage, and cruised its shores in his yacht. But he was not happy!

He was a man of taste, and sipped the arts and other knowledge, as he sauntered Europe round.

But he was not happy.

"What shall I do?" said l'ennuye.

"Distinguish yourself," said one.

"How?"

No immediate answer.

"Take a prima donna over," said another.

Well, the man took a prima donna over, which scolded its maid from the Alps to Dover in the lingua Toscana without the bocca Romana, and sang in London without applause; because what goes down at La Scala does not generally go down at Il Teatro della Regina, Haymarket.

So then my Lord strolled into Russia; there he drove a pair of horses, one of whom put his head down and did the work; the other pranced and capricoled alongside, all unconscious of the trace. He seemed happier than his working brother; but the biped, whose career corresponded with this playful animal's, was not happy!

At length an event occurred that promised to play an adagio upon Lord Ipsden's mind. He fell in love with Lady Barbara Sinclair; and he had no sooner done this than he felt, as we are all apt to do on similar occasions, how wise a thing he had done!

Besides a lovely person, Lady Barbara Sinclair had a character that he saw would make him; and, in fact, Lady Barbara Sinclair was, to an inexperienced eye, the exact opposite of Lord Ipsden.

Her mental pulse was as plethoric as his was languid.

She was as enthusiastic as he was cool.

She took a warm interest in everything.

She believed that Government is a science, and one that goes with copia verborum.

She believed that, in England, Government is administered, not by a set of men whose salaries range from eighty to five hundred pounds a year, and whose names are never heard, but by the First Lord of the Treasury, and other great men.

Hence she inferred that it matters very much to all of us in whose hand is the rudder of that state vessel which goes down the wind of public opinion without veering a point, let who will be at the helm.

She also cared very much who was the new Bishop. Religion, if not religion, theology, would be affected thereby.

She was enthusiastic about poets; imagined their verse to be some sort of clue to their characters, and so on.

She had other theories, which will be indicated by-and-by; at present it is enough to say that her mind was young, healthy, somewhat original, full of fire and faith, and empty of experience.

Lord Ipsden loved her; it was easy to love her.

First, there was not, in the whole range of her mind and body, one grain of affectation of any sort.

She was always, in point of fact, under the influence of some male mind or other, generally some writer. What young woman is not, more or less, a mirror? But she never imitated or affected; she was always herself, by whomsoever coloured.

Then she was beautiful and eloquent; much too high-bred to put a restraint upon her natural manner, she was often

more naïve, and even brusque, than your would-be aristocrats dare to be; but what a charming abruptness hers was!

I do not excel in descriptions, and yet I want to give you some carnal idea of a certain peculiarity and charm this lady possessed; permit me to call a sister art to my aid.

There has lately stepped upon the French stage a charming personage, whose manner is quite free from the affectation that soils nearly all French actresses—Mademoiselle Madeleine Brohan! When you see this young lady play Mademoiselle La Seglière, you see high-bred sensibility personified, and you see something like Lady Barbara Sinclair.

She was a connexion of Lord Ipsden's, but they had not met for two years, when they encountered each other in Paris just before the commencement of this "Dramatic Story," "Novel" by courtesy.

The month he spent in Paris, near her, was a bright month to Lord Ipsden. A bystander would not have gathered, from his manner, that he was warmly in love with this lady, but, for all that, his Lordship was gradually uncoiling himself, and gracefully, quietly, basking in the rays of Barbara Sinclair.

He was also just beginning to take an interest in subjects of the day—ministries, flat paintings, controversial novels, Cromwell's spotless integrity, &c.—why not? They interested her.

Suddenly the lady and her family returned to England. Lord Ipsden, who was going to Rome, came to England instead.

She had not been five days in London, before she made her preparations to spend six months in Perthshire.

This brought matters to a climax.

Lord Ipsden proposed in form.

Lady Barbara was surprised; she had not viewed his graceful attentions in that light at all. However, she answered by letter his proposal, which had been made by letter.

After a few of those courteous words a lady always bestows on a gentleman who has offered her the highest compliment any man has it in his power to offer any woman, she came to the point in the following characteristic manner:

"The man I marry must have two things, virtues and vices—you have neither: you do nothing, and never will do anything but sketch and hum tunes, and dance and dangle: forget this folly the day after to-morrow, my dear Ipsden, and if I may ask a favour of one to whom I refuse that which would not be a kindness, be still good friends with her who will always be—Your affectionate *Cousin*, BARBARA SINCLAIR."

Soon after this effusion she vanished into Perthshire, leaving her cousin stunned by a blow which she thought would be only a scratch to one of his character.

Lord Ipsden relapsed into greater listlessness than before he had cherished these crushed hopes. The world now became really dark and blank to him. He was too languid to go anywhere or do anything; a republican might have compared the settled expression of his handsome, hopeless face with that of most day-labourers of the same age, and moderated his envy of the rich and titled.

At last he became so pale as well as languid, that Mr. Saunders interfered.

Saunders was a model valet and factotum; who had been with his master ever since he left Eton, and had made himself necessary to him in their journeys.

The said Saunders was really an invaluable servant, and with a world of obsequiousness, contrived to have his own way on most occasions. He had, I believe, only one great weakness, that of imagining a *beau-ideal* of aristocracy, and then outdoing it in the person of John Saunders.

Now this Saunders was human, and could not be eight years with this young gentleman and not take some little interest in him. He was flunky, and took a great interest in him, as stepping-stone to his own greatness. So when he saw him turning pale and thin, and reading one letter fifty times, he speculated and inquired what was the matter. He brought the intellect of Mr. Saunders to bear on the question at the following angle:

"Now, if I was a young lord with £20,000 a year, and all the world at my feet, what would make me in this way?"

"Why, the liver! Nothing else."

"And that is what is wrong with him, you may depend."

This conclusion arrived at, Mr. Saunders coolly wrote his convictions to Dr. Aberford, and desired that gentleman's immediate attention to the case. An hour or two later, he glided into his lord's room, not without some secret trepidation, no trace of which appeared on his face—he pulled a long histrionic countenance. "My Lord," said he, in soft, melancholy tones, "your Lordship's melancholy state of health gives me great anxiety; and, with many apologies to your Lordship, the Doctor is sent for, my Lord."

"Why, Saunders, you are mad; there is nothing the matter with me."

"I beg your Lordship's pardon, your Lordship is very ill, and Dr. Aberford sent for."

"You may go, Saunders."

"Yes, my Lord. I couldn't help it; I've outstepped my duty, my Lord, but I could not stand quiet and see your Lordship dying by inches." Here Mr. S. put a cambric handkerchief artistically to his eyes and glided out, having disarmed censure.

Lord Ipsden fell into a reverie.

"Is my mind or my body disordered? Dr. Aberford!—absurd!—Saunders is getting too pragmatical. The Doctor shall prescribe for him instead of me; by Jove, that would serve him right." And my Lord faintly chuckled. "No! this is what I am ill of,"—and he read the fatal note again. "I do nothing!—cruel, unjust," sighed he. "I could have done, would have done, anything to please her. Do nothing! nobody does anything now—things don't come in your way to be done as they used centuries ago, or we should do them just the same; it is their fault, not ours," argued his Lordship somewhat confusedly; then leaning his brow upon the sofa, he wished to die; for, at that dark moment, life seemed to this fortunate man an aching void; a weary, stale, flat, unprofitable tale; a faded flower; a ballroom after daylight has crept in, and music, motion, and beauty are fled away.

"Dr. Aberford, my Lord."

This announcement, made by Mr. Saunders, checked his Lordship's reverie.

"Insults everybody, does he not, Saunders?"

"Yes, my Lord," said Saunders monotonously.

"Perhaps he will me; that might amuse me," said the other.

A moment later the Doctor bowled into the apartment, tugging at his gloves as he ran.

The contrast between him and our poor rich friend is almost beyond human language.

Here lay, on a sofa, Ipsden, one of the most distinguished young gentlemen in Europe: a creature incapable, by nature, of a rugged tone or a coarse gesture; a being without the slightest apparent pretension, but refined beyond the wildest dream of dandies. To him, enter Aberford, perspiring and shouting. He was one of those globules of human quicksilver one sees now and then, for two seconds; they are, in fact, two globules; their head is one, invariably bald, round, and glittering: the body is another in activity and shape, *totus teres atque rotundus;* and in fifty years they live five centuries. Horem Rex Aberford—of these our Doctor was the chief. He had hardly torn off one glove, and rolled as far as the third flower from the door on his Lordship's carper before he shouted,

"This is my patient, lolloping in pursuit of health. Your hand," added he. For he was at the sofa long before his Lordship could glide off it.

"Tongue.—Pulse is good.—Breathe in my face."

'Breathe in your face, sir! How can I do that?" (with an air of mild doubt).

"By first inhaling, and then exhaling in the direction required, or how can I make acquaintance with your bowels?"

"My bowels!"

"The abdomen and the greater and lesser intestines. Well, never mind; I can get at them another way; give your heart a slap, so.—That's your liver.—And that's your diaphragm."

His Lordship having found the required spot (some people that I know could not) and slapped it, the Aberford made a circular spring and listened eagerly at his shoulder-blade; the result of this scientific pantomime seemed to be satisfactory, for he exclaimed, not to say bawled—

"Hallo! here is a Viscount as sound as a roach. Now, young gentleman," added he, "your organs are superb, yet you are really out of sorts; it follows you have the maladies of idle minds, love, perhaps, among the rest; you blush, a diagnostic of that disorder; make your mind easy, cutaneous disorders, such as love, &c., shall never kill a patient of mine, with a stomach like yours: so, now to cure you!" And away went the spherical Doctor, with his hands behind him, not up and down the room, but slanting and tacking, like a knight on a chess-board. He had not made many steps, before, turning his upper globule, without affecting his lower, he hurled back, in a cold, business-like tone, the following interrogatory:

"What are your vices?"

"Saunders," inquired the patient, "which are my vices?"

"M' Lord, Lordship hasn't any vices," replied Saunders, with dull, matter-of-fact solemnity.

"Lady Barbara makes the same complaint," thought Lord Ipsden.

"It seems I have not any vices, Dr. Aberford," said he demurely.

"That is bad; nothing to get hold of. What interests you, then?"

"I don't remember."

"What amuses you?"

"I forget."

"What! no winning horse to gallop away your rents?"

"No, sir!"

"No Opera Girl, to run her foot and ankle through your purse?"

"No, sir! and I think their ankles are not what they were."

"Stuff! just the same, from their ankles up to their ears, and down again to their morals; it is your eyes that are sunk deeper into your head. Hum! no horses, no vices, no dancers, no yacht; you confound one's notions of nobility, and I ought to know them, for I have to patch them all up a bit just before they got to the deuce."

"But I have, Doctor Aberford."

"What!"

"A yacht! and a clipper she is too."

"Ah!—(Now I've got him)."

"In the Bay of Biscay she lay half a point nearer the wind than Lord Heavyjib."

"Oh! bother Lord Heavyjib and his Bay of Biscay."

"With all my heart, they have often bothered me."

"Send her round to Granton Pier, in the Firth of Forth."

"I will, sir."

"And write down this prescription." And away he walked again, thinking the prescription.

"Saunders," appealed his master.

"Saunders be hanged!"

"Sir!" said Saunders, with dignity, "I thank you."

"Don't thank me, thank your own deserts," replied the modern Chesterfield. "Oblige me by writing it yourself, my Lord, it is all the bodily exercise you will have had to-day, no doubt."

The young Viscount bowed, seated himself at a desk, and wrote from dictation—

"Dr. Aberford's Prescription.

"Make acquaintance with all the people of low estate, who have time to be bothered with you; learn their ways, their minds, and, above all, their troubles."

"Won't all this bore me?" suggested the writer.

"You will see. Relieve one fellow-creature every day, and let Mr. Saunders book the circumstances."

"I shall like this part," said the patient, laying down his pen. "How clever of you to think of such things; may not I do two sometimes?"

"Certainly not; one pill per day.—Write, Fish the herring! (that beats deer-stalking). Run your nose into adventures at sea; live on tenpence, and earn it. Is it down?"

"Yes, it is down; but Saunders would have written it better."

"If he hadn't he ought to be hanged," said the Aberford, inspecting the work. "I'm off, where's my hat? oh, there; where's my money? oh, here. Now look here, follow my prescription, and

> 'You will soon have Mens sana in corpore sano;
> And not care whether the girls say yes or say no.'

Neglect it, and—my gloves; oh, in my pocket—you will be *blasé*, and *ennuyé*, and—(an English participle, that means something as bad); God bless you!"

And out he scuttled, glided after by Saunders, for whom he opened and shut the street-door.

Never was a greater effect produced by a doctor's visit: patient and physician were made for each other. Dr. Aberford was the specific for Lord Ipsden. He came to him like a shower to a fainting strawberry.

Saunders, on his return, found his lord pacing the apartment.

"Saunders," said he smartly; "send down to Gravesend, and order the yacht to this place—what is it?"

"Granton Pier. Yes, my Lord."

"And, Saunders, take clothes, and books, and violins, and telescopes, and things—and me—to Euston Square, in an hour."

"Impossible, my Lord," cried Saunders in dismay. "And there is no train for hours."

His master replied with a hundred-pound note, and a quiet, but wickedish look; and the prince of gentlemen's gentlemen had all the required items with him, in a special train, within the specified time, and away they flashed, northwards.

CHAPTER II

It is said that opposite characters make a union happiest; and perhaps Lord Ipsden, diffident of himself, felt the value to him of a creature so different as Lady Barbara Sinclair; but the lady, for her part, was not diffident of herself, nor was she in search of her opposite; on the contrary, she was waiting patiently to find just such a man as she was, or fancied herself, a woman.

Accustomed to measure men by their characters alone, and to treat with sublime contempt the accidents of birth and for-

tune, she had been a little staggered by the assurance of this butterfly that had proposed to settle upon her hand—for life.

In a word, the beautiful writer of the fatal note was honestly romantic, according to the romance of 1848, and of good society; of course she was not affected by hair tumbling back or plastered down forwards, and a rolling eye went no farther with her than a squinting one.

Her romance was stern, not sickly. She was on the look-out for iron virtues; she had sworn to be wooed with great deeds, or never won; on this subject she had thought much, though not enough to ask herself whether great deeds are always to be got at, however disposed a lover may be.

No matter; she kept herself in reserve for some earnest man, who was not to come flattering and fooling to her, but look another way and do exploits.

She liked Lord Ipsden, her cousin once removed, but despised him for being agreeable, handsome, clever, and nobody.

She was also a little bitten with what she and others called the Middle Ages, in fact with that picture of them which Grub Street, imposing on the simplicity of youth, had got up for sale by arraying painted glass, gilt rags, and fancy, against fact.

With these vague and sketchy notices we are compelled to part, for the present, with Lady Barbara: but it serves her right; she has gone to establish her court in Perthshire, and left her rejected lover on our hands.

Journeys of a few hundred miles are no longer described.

You exchange a dead chair for a living chair; Saunders puts in your hand a new tale like this; you mourn the superstition of booksellers, which still inflicts uncut leaves upon humanity, though tailors do not send home coats with the sleeves stitched up, nor chambermaids put travellers into apple-pie beds as well as damp sheets. You rend and read, and are at Edinburgh, fatigued more or less, but not by the journey.

Lord Ipsden was, therefore, soon installed by the Firth side, full of the Aberford.

The young nobleman not only venerated the Doctor's sagacity, but half admired his brusquerie and bustle; things of which he was himself never guilty.

As for the prescription, that was a Delphic Oracle. Worlds could not have tempted him to deviate from a letter in it.

He waited with impatience for the yacht; and, meantime, it struck him that the first part of the prescription could be attacked at once.

It was the afternoon of the day succeeding his arrival. The

Fifeshire hills, seen across the Firth from his windows, were beginning to take their charming violet tinge, a light breeze ruffled the blue water into a sparkling smile, the shore was tranquil, and the sea full of noiseless life, with the craft of all sizes gliding and dancing and curtseying on their trackless roads.

The air was tepid, pure, and sweet as heaven; this bright afternoon, nature had grudged nothing that could give fresh life and hope to such dwellers in dust and smoke and vice, as were there, to look awhile on her clean face and drink her honeyed breath.

This young gentleman was not insensible to the beauty of the scene. He was a little lazy by nature, and made lazier by the misfortune of wealth, but he had sensibilities; he was an artist of great natural talent; had he only been without a penny, how he would have handled the brush! And then he was a mighty sailor; if he had sailed for biscuit a few years, how he would have handled a ship!

As he was, he had the eye of a hawk for Nature's beauties, and the sea always came back to him like a friend after an absence.

This scene, then, curled round his heart a little, and he felt the good physician was wiser than the tribe that go by that name, and strive to build health on the sandy foundation of drugs.

"Saunders! do you know what Dr. Aberford means by the lower classes?"

"Perfectly, my Lord."

"Are there any about here?"

"I am sorry to say they are everywhere, my Lord."

"Get me some"—(*cigarette*).

Out went Saunders, with his useful graceful *empressement*, but an internal shrug of his shoulders.

He was absent an hour and a half; he then returned with a double expression on his face—pride at his success in diving to the very bottom of Society, and contempt of what he had fished up thence.

He approached his Lord mysteriously, and said, *sotto voce*, but impressively, "This is low enough, my Lord." Then glided back, and ushered in, with polite disdain, two lovelier women than he had ever opened a door to in the whole course of his perfumed existence.

On their heads they wore caps of Dutch or Flemish origin, with a broad lace border, stiffened and arched over the forehead, about three inches high, leaving the brow and cheeks unencumbered.

They had cotton jackets, bright red and yellow, mixed in patterns, confined at the waist by the apron-strings, but bobtailed below the waist; short woollen petticoats, with broad vertical stripes, red and white, most vivid in colour; white worsted stockings, and neat, though high-quartered shoes. Under their jackets they wore a thick spotted cotton handkerchief, about one inch of which was visible round the lower part of the throat.

Of their petticoats, the outer one was kilted, or gathered up towards the front, and the second, of the same colour, hung in the usual way.

Of these young women, one had an olive complexion, with the red blood mantling under it, and black hair, and glorious black eyebrows.

The other was fair, with a massive but shapely throat, as white as milk: glossy brown hair, the loose threads of which glittered like gold, and a blue eye, which, being contrasted with dark eyebrows and lashes, took the luminous effect peculiar to that rare beauty.

Their short petticoats revealed a neat ankle, and a leg with a noble swell; for Nature, when she is in earnest, builds beauty on the ideas of ancient sculptors and poets, not of modern poetasters, who with their airy-like sylphs and their smoke-like verses, fight for want of flesh in woman and want of fact in poetry as parallel beauties.

They are, my lads.—*Continues!*

These women had a grand corporeal traet; they had never known a corset! so they were straight as javelins; they could lift their hands above their heads!—actually! Their supple persons moved as Nature intended: every gesture was ease, grace, and freedom.

What with their own radiance, and the snowy cleanliness and brightness of their costume, they came like meteors into the apartment.

Lord Ipsden, rising gently from his seat, with the same quiet politeness with which he would have received two princes of the blood, said, "How do you do?" and smiled a welcome.

"Fine! hoow's yoursel?" answered the dark lass, whose name was Jean Carnie, and whose voice was not so sweet as her face.

"What'n lord are ye?" continued she. "Are you a juke? I wad like fine to hae a crack wi' a juke."

Saunders, who knew himself the cause of this question, replied, *sotto voce,* "His Lordship is a viscount."

"I didna ken't," was Jean's remark. "But it has a bonny soond."

"What mair would ye hae?" said the fair beauty, whose name was Christie Johnstone. Then appealing to his Lordship as the likeliest to know, she added, "Nobeelity is just a soond itsel, I'm tauld."

The Viscount finding himself expected to say something on a topic he had not attended much to, answered drily, "We must ask the republicans, they are the people that give their minds to such subjects."

"And yon man," asked Jean Carnie, "is he a lord, too?"

"I am his Lordship's servant," replied Saunders gravely, not without a secret misgiving whether fate had been just.

"Na!" replied she, not to be imposed upon, "ye are statelier and prooder than this ane."

"I will explain," said his master. "Saunders knows his value: a servant like Saunders is rarer than an idle viscount."

"My Lord, my Lord!" remonstrated Saunders, with a shocked and most disclamatory tone. "Rather!" was his inward reflection.

"Jean," said Christie, "ye hae muckle to laern. Are ye for herrin' the day, Vile Count?"

"No! are you for this sort of thing?"

At this, Saunders, with a world of *empressement*, offered the Carnie some cake that was on the table.

She took a piece, instantly spat it out into her hand, and with more energy than delicacy flung it into the fire.

"Augh!" cried she, "just a sugar and saut butter thegither; buy nae mair at yon shoep, Vile Count."

"Try this, out of Nature's shop," laughed their entertainer; and he offered them, himself, some peaches and things.

"Hech! a medi—cine!" said Christie.

"Nature, my lad," said Miss Carnie, making her ivory teeth meet in their first nectarine, "I didna ken whaur ye stoep, but ye beat the other confectioners, that div ye."

The fair lass, who had watched the Viscount all this time as demurely as a cat cream, now approached him.

This young woman was the thinker; her voice was also rich, full, and melodious, and her manner very engaging; it was half advancing, half retiring, not easy to resist, or to describe.

"Noo," said she, with a very slight blush stealing across her face, "ye maun let me catecheeze ye, wull ye?"

The last two words were said in a way that would have induced a bear to reveal his winter residence.

He smiled assent. Saunders retired to the door, and excluding every shade of curiosity from his face, took an attitude, half majesty, half obsequiousness.

Christie stood by Lord Ipsden, with one hand on her hip (the knuckles downwards), but graceful as Antinous, and began—

"Hoo muckle is the Queen greater than y' are?"

His Lordship was obliged to reflect.

"Let me see—as is the moon to a wax taper, so is her Majesty the Queen to you and me, and the rest."

"An' whaur does the Juke[1] come in?"

"On this particular occasion, the Duke[2] makes one of us, my pretty maid."

"I see! Are na ye awfu' proud o' being a Lorrd?"

"What an idea!"

"His Lordship did not go to bed a spinning-jenny, and rise up a lord, like some of them," put in Saunders.

"Saunders," said the Peer doubtfully, "eloquence rather bores people."

"Then I mustn't speak again, my Lord," said Saunders respectfully.

"Noo," said the fair inquisitor, "ye shall tell me how ye came to be Lorrds, your faemily?"

"Saunders!"

"Na! ye mauna flee to Sandy for a'thing, ye are no a bairn, are ye?"

Here was a dilemma, the Saunders prop knocked rudely away, and obliged to think for ourselves.

But Saunders would come to his distressed master's assistance. He furtively conveyed to him a plump book,—this was Saunders's manual of faith; the author was Mr. Burke, not Edmund.

Lord Ipsden ran hastily over the page, closed the book, and said, "Here is the story."

"Five hundred years ago——"

"Listen, Jean," said Christie; "we're gaun to get a boeny story. 'Five hundre' years ago,'" added she, with interest and awe.

"Was a great battle," resumed the narrator, in cheerful tones, as one larking with history,—"between a King of England and his rebels. He was in the thick of the fight——"

"That's the King, Jean, he was in the thick o't."

"My ancestor killed a fellow who was sneaking behind

[1] Buccleuch. [2] Wellington.

him, but the next moment a man-at-arms prepared a thrust at his Majesty, who had his hands full with three assailants."

"Eh! that's no fair," said Christie, "as sure as deeth."

"My ancestor dashed forward, and as the King's sword passed through one of them, he clove another to the waist with a blow."

"Weel done! weel done!"

Lord Ipsden looked at the speaker, her eyes were glittering, and her cheek flushing.

"Good Heavens!" thought he; "she believes it!" So he began to take more pains with his legend.

"But for the spearsman," continued he, "he had nothing but his body; he gave it, it was his duty, and received the death levelled at his sovereign."

"Hech! puir mon." And the glowing eyes began to glisten.

"The battle flowed another way, and God gave victory to the right; but the king came back to look for him, for it was no common service."

"Deed no!"

Here Lord Ipsden began to turn his eye inwards, and call up the scene. He lowered his voice—

"They found him lying on his back, looking death in the face.

"The nobles, by the King's side, uncovered as soon as he was found, for they were brave men, too. There was a moment's silence; eyes met eyes, and said, this is a stout soldier's last battle.

"The King could not bid him live."

"Na! lad, King Deeth has ower strong a grrip."

"But he did what kings can do, he gave him two blows with his royal sword."

"Oh! the robber, and him a deeing mon."

"Two words from his royal mouth, and he and we were Barons of Ipsden and Hawthorn Glen from that day to this."

"But the puir dying creature?"

"What poor dying creature?"

"Your Forbear, lad."

"I don't know why you call him poor, madam, all the men of that day are dust; they are the gold dust, who died with honour.

"He looked round, uneasily, for his son,—for he had but one,—and when that son knelt, unwounded by him, he said, 'Good-night, Baron Ipsden;' and so he died, fire in his eye, a smile on his lip, and honour on his name for ever. I meant to tell you a lie, and I've told you the truth."

"Laddie," said Christie, half admiringly, half reproachfully,

"ye gar the tear come in my een. Hech! look at yon lassie! how could you think t'eat plums through siccan a bonny story?"

"Hets," answered Jean, who had, in fact, cleared the plate, "I aye listen best when my ain mooth's stappit."

"But see, now," pondered Christie, "twa words fra a King, —thir titles are just breeth."

"Of course," was the answer. "All titles are. What is popularity? ask Aristides and Lamartine:—the breath of a mob—smells of its source—and is gone before the sun can set on it. Now the royal breath does smell of the Rose and Crown, and stays by us from age to age."

The story had warmed our marble acquaintance. Saunders opened his eyes, and thought, "We shall wake up the House of Lords some evening,—*we* shall."

His Lordship then added, less warmly, looking at the girls—

"I think I should like to be a fisherman." So saying, my Lord yawned slightly.

To this aspiration the young fishwives deigned no attention, doubting, perhaps, its sincerity; and Christie, with a shade of severity, inquired of him how he came to be a Vile Count.

"A baron's no' a Vile Count, I'm sure," said she; "sae tell me how ye came to be a Vile Count."

"Ah!" said he, "that is by no means a pretty story, like the other; you will not like it, I am sure."

"Ay, will I—ay, will I—I'm aye seeking knoewledge."

"Well, it is soon told. One of us sat twenty years on one seat, in the same house, so one day he got up a—Viscount."

"Ower muckle pay for ower little wark."

"Now don't say that, I wouldn't do it to be Emperor of Russia."

"Aweel, I hae gotten a heap out o' ye; sae noow I'll gang, since ye are no for herrin'; come away, Jean."

At this their host remonstrated, and inquired, why bores are at one's service, night and day, and bright people are always in a hurry; he was informed, in reply, "Labour is the lot o' man. Div ye no ken that muckle? And abune a' o' women."[1]

"Why, what can two such pretty creatures have to do, except to be admired?"

This question, coming within the dark beauty's scope, she hastened to reply.

"To sell our herrin'—we hae three hundre' left in the creel."

"What is the price?"

At this question the poetry died out of Christie Johnstone's

[1] A local idea, I suspect.—C. R.

face, she gave her companion a rapid look, indiscernible by male eye, and answered—

"Three a penny, sirr; they are no plenty the day," added she, in smooth tones that carried conviction.

(Little liar, they were selling six a penny everywhere).

"Saunders, buy them all, and be ever so long about it; count them, or some nonsense."

"He's daft! he's daft! Oh, ye ken Jean, an Ennglishman and a lorrd, twa daft things thegither, he coold na miss the road. Coont them, lassie."

"Come away, Sandy, till I count them till ye," said Jean.

Saunders and Jean disappeared.

Business being out of sight, curiosity revived.

"An' what brings ye here from London, if ye please?" recommenced the fair inquisitor.

"You have a good countenance; there is something in your face. I could find it in my heart to tell you, but I should bore you."

"De'el a fear! Bore me, bore me! whaat's thaat, I wonder?"

"What is your name, madam? Mine is Ipsden."

"They ca' me Christie Johnstone."

"Well, Christie Johnstone, I am under the doctor's hands."

"Puir lad. What's the trouble?" (solemnly and tenderly).

"Ennui!" (rather piteously).

"Yawn-we? I never heerd tell o't."

"Oh you lucky girl," burst out he; "but the doctor has undertaken to cure me: in one thing you could assist me, if I am not presuming too far on our short acquaintance. I am to relieve one poor distressed person every day, but I mustn't do two: is not that a bore?"

"Gie's your hand, gie's your hand. I'm vexed for ca'ing you daft. Hech! what a saft hand ye hae. Jean, I'm saying, come here, feel this."

Jean, who had run in, took the Viscount's hand from Christie.

"It never wrought any," explained Jean.

"And he has bonny hair," said Christie, just touching his locks on the other side.

"He's a bonny lad," said Jean, inspecting him scientifically and point-blank.

"Ay, is he," said the other. "Aweel, there's Jess Rutherford, a widdy, wi' four bairns, ye meicht do waur than ware your siller on her."

"Five pounds to begin?" inquired his Lordship.

"Five pund! Are ye made o' siller? Ten schell'n!"

Saunders was rung for, and produced a one-pound note.

"The herrin' is five and saxpence: it's four and saxpence I'm awin ye," said the young fishwife, "and Jess will be a glad woman the neicht."

The settlement was effected, and away went the two friends, saying—

"Good boye, Vile Count."

Their host fell into thought.

"When have I talked so much?" asked he of himself.

"Dr. Aberford, you are a wonderful man; I like your lower classes amazingly."

"Méfiez vous, Monsieur Ipsden!" should some mentor have said.

As the devil puts into a beginner's hands ace, queen, five trumps, to give him a taste for whist, so these lower classes have perhaps put forward one of their best cards to lead you into a false estimate of the strength of their hand.

Instead, however, of this, who should return to disturb the equilibrium of truth, but this Christina Johnstone. She came thoughtfully in, and said—

"I've been taking a thocht, and this is no what yon gude physeecian meaned; ye are no to fling your chaerity like a bane till a doeg; ye'll gang yoursel to Jess Rutherford; Flucker Johnstone, that's my brother, will convoy ye."

"But how is your brother to know me?"

"How? Because I'll gie him a sair sair hiding, if he lets ye gang by."

She then returned the one-pound note, a fresh settlement was effected, and she left him.

At the door, she said, "And I am muckle obleeged to ye for your story and your goodness."

Whilst uttering these words, she half kissed her hand to him, with a lofty and disengaged gesture, such as one might expect from a queen, if queens did not wear stays; and was gone.

When his Lordship, a few minutes after, sauntered out for a stroll, the first object he beheld was an exact human square, a handsome boy, with a body swelled out, apparently to the size of a man's, with blue flannel, and blue cloth above it, leaning against a wall, with his hands in his pockets—a statuette of insouciance.

This marine puff-ball was Flucker Johnstone, aged fourteen.

Stain his sister's face with diluted walnut-juice, as they make the stage gipsy and Red Indian (two animals imagined by actors to be one), and you have Flucker's face.

A slight moral distinction remains, not to be so easily got over. She was the best girl in the place, and he a baddish boy.

He was, however, as sharp in his way as she was intelligent in hers.

This youthful mariner allowed his Lordship to pass him, and take twenty steps, but watched him all the time, and compared him with a description furnished him by his sister.

He then followed, and brought him to, as he called it.

"I daur say it's you I'm to convoy to yon auld faggitt!" said this baddish boy.

On they went, Flucker rolling and pitching and yawing to keep up with the lordly galley, for a fisherman's natural waddle is two miles an hour.

At the very entrance of Newhaven, the new pilot suddenly sang out, "Starboard!"

Starboard it was, and they ascended a filthy "close" or alley; they mounted a staircase which was out of doors, and without knocking, Flucker introduced himself into Jess Rutherford's house.

"Here a gentleman to speak till ye, wife."

CHAPTER III

The widow was weather-beaten and rough. She sat mending an old net.

"The gentleman's welcome," said she; but there was no gratification in her tone, and but little surprise.

His Lordship then explained that, understanding there were worthy people in distress, he was in hopes he might be permitted to assist them, and that she must blame a neighbour of hers if he had broken in upon her too abruptly with this object. He then, with a blush, hinted at ten shillings, which he begged she would consider as merely an instalment, until he could learn the precise nature of her embarrassments, and the best way of placing means at her disposal.

The widow heard all this with a lack-lustre mind.

For many years her life had been unsuccessful labour; if anything ever had come to her, it had always been a misfortune; her incidents had been thorns—her events, daggers.

She could not realise a human angel coming to her relief, and she did not realise it, and she worked away at her net.

At this Flucker, to whom his Lordship's speech appeared

monstrously weak and pointless, drew nigh, and gave the widow, in her ear, his version, namely, his sister's embellished. It was briefly this :—"That the gentleman was a daft Lord from England, who had come with the bank in his breeks, to remove poverty from Scotland, beginning with her. 'Sae speak loud aneuch, and ye'll no want siller,'" was his polite corollary.

His Lordship rose, laid a card on a chair, begged her to make use of him, et cetera; he then, recalling the oracular prescription, said, "Do me the favour to apply to me for any little sum you have a use for, and in return I will beg of you (if it does not bore you too much) to make me acquainted with any little troubles you may have encountered in the course of your life."

His Lordship, receiving no answer, was about to go, after bowing to her, and smiling gracefully upon her.

His hand was on the latch, when Jess Rutherford burst into a passion of tears.

He turned with surprise.

"*My troubles*, laddie," cried she, trembling all over. "The sun wad set, and rise, and set again, ere I could tell ye a' the trouble I hae come through.

"Oh! ye need na vex yourself for an auld wife's tears; tears are a blessin', lad, I shall assure ye. Mony's the time I hae prayed for them, and could na hae them. Sit ye doon! sit ye doon! I'll no let ye gang fra my door till I hae thankit ye—but gie me time, gie me time. I canna greet a' the days of the week."

Flucker, ætat. 14, opened his eyes, unable to connect ten shillings and tears.

Lord Ipsden sat down, and felt very sorry for her.

And she cried at her ease.

If one touch of nature make the whole world kin, methinks that sweet and wonderful thing, sympathy, is not less powerful. What frozen barriers, what ice of centuries, it can melt in a moment!

His bare mention of her troubles had surprised the widowed woman's heart, and now she looked up, and examined his countenance; it was soon done.

A woman, young or old, high or low, can discern and appreciate sensibility in a man's face, at a single glance.

What she saw there was enough. She was sure of sympathy. She recalled her resolve, and the tale of her sorrows burst from her, like a flood.

Then the old fishwife told the young Aristocrat how she

had borne twelve children, and buried six as bairns; how her man was always unlucky; how a mast fell on him, and disabled him a whole season; how they could but just keep the pot boiling by the deep-sea fishing, and he was not allowed to dredge for oysters, because his father was not a Newhaven man. How, when the herring-fishing came, to make all right, he never had another man's luck; how his boat's crew would draw empty nets, and a boat alongside him would be gunwale down in the water with the fish. How, at last, one morning, the 20th day of November, his boat came in to Newhaven Pier without him, and when he was inquired for, his crew said, "He had stayed at home, like a lazy loon, and not sailed with them the night before." How she was anxious, and had all the public-houses searched, "For he took a drop now and then, nae wonder, and him aye in the weather." Poor thing! when he was alive she used to call him a drunken scoundrel to his face. How, when the tide went down, a mad wife, whose husband had been drowned twenty years ago, pointed out something under the pier, that the rest took for sea-weed floating—how it was the hair of her man's head, washed about by the water, and he was there, drowned without a cry or a struggle, by his enormous boots, that kept him in an upright position, though he was dead; there he stood,—dead—drowned by slipping from the slippery pier, close to his comrades' hands, in a dark and gusty night; how her daughter married, and was well to do, and assisted her; how she fell into a rapid decline, and died, a picture of health to inexperienced eyes. How she, the mother, saw and knew, and watched the treacherous advance of disease and death; how others said gaily, "Her daughter was better," and she was obliged to say "Yes." How she had worked, eighteen hours a day, at making nets; how, when she let out her nets to the other men at the herring-fishing, they always cheated her, because her man was gone. How she had many times had to choose between begging her meal and going to bed without it, but, thank Heaven! she had always chosen the latter.

She told him of hunger, cold, and anguish. As she spoke they became real things to him; up to that moment they had been things in a story-book. And as she spoke she rocked herself from side to side.

Indeed, she was a woman "acquainted with grief." She might have said, "Here I and sorrow sit! This is my throne, bid kings come and bow to it!"

Her hearer felt this, and therefore this woman, poor, old, and

ugly, became sacred in his eye; it was with a strange sort of respect that he tried to console her.

He spoke to her in tones gentle and sweet as the south wind on a summer evening.

"Madam," said he, "let me be so happy as to bring you some comfort. The sorrows of the heart I cannot heal; they are for a mightier hand; but a part of your distress appears to have been positive need; that we can at least dispose of, and I entreat you to believe that from this hour want shall never enter that door again. Never! upon my honour!"

The Scotch are icebergs, with volcanoes underneath; thaw the Scotch ice, which is very cold, and you shall get to the Scotch fire, warmer than any sun of Italy or Spain.

His Lordship had risen to go. The old wife had seemed absorbed in her own grief; she now dried her tears.

"Bide ye, sirr," said she, "till I thank ye."

So she began to thank him, rather coldly and stiffly.

"He says ye are lord," said she; "I dinna ken, an' I dinna care: but ye're a gentleman, I daur say, and a kind heart ye hae."

Then she began to warm.

"And ye'll never be a grain the poorer for the siller ye hae gien me; for he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

Then she began to glow.

"But it's no your siller; dinna think it—na, lad, na! Oh, fine; I ken there's mony a supper for the bairns and me in yon bits metal; but I canna feel your siller as I feel your winsome smile—the drop in your young een—an' the sweet words ye gied me, in the sweet music o' your Soothern tongue, Gude bless ye!" (Where was her ice by this time?) "Gude bless ye! and I bless ye!"

And she did bless him; and what a blessing it was;—not a melodious generality, like a stage parent's, or papa's in a damsel's novel. It was like the son of Barak on Zophim.

She blessed him, as one who had the power and the right to bless or curse.

She stood on the high ground of her low estate, and her afflictions—and demanded of their Creator to bless the fellow-creature that had come to her aid and consolation.

This woman had suffered to the limits of endurance; yesterday she had said, "Surely the Almighty does na *see* me a' these years!"

So now she blessed him, and her heart's blood seemed to gush into words.

She blessed him by land and water.

She knew most mortal griefs; for she had felt them.

She warned them away from him one by one.

She knew the joys of life; for she had felt their want.

She summoned them one by one to his side.

"And a fair wind to your ship," cried she; "an' the storms aye ten miles to leeward o' her."

Many happy days, "an' weel spent," she wished him.

"His love should love him dearly, or a better take her place."

"Health to his side by day; sleep to his pillow by night."

A thousand good wishes came, like a torrent of fire, from her lips, with a power that eclipsed his dreams of human eloquence; and then, changing in a moment from the thunder of a Pythoness to the tender music of some poetess mother, she ended—

"An' oh, my boenny, boenny lad, may ye be wi' the rich upon the airth a' your days—AND WI' THE PUIR IN THE WARLD TO COME!"

His Lordship's tongue refused him the thin phrases of society.

"Farewell for the present," said he, and he went quietly away.

He paced thoughtfully home.

He had drunk a fact with every sentence; and an idea with every fact.

For the knowledge we have never realised is not knowledge to us—only knowledge's shadow.

With the banished Duke, he now began to feel "we are not alone unhappy;" this universal world contains other guess sorrows than yours, Viscount—scilicet than unvarying health, unbroken leisure, and incalculable income.

Then this woman's eloquence! bless me! he had seen folk murmur politely in the Upper House, and drone or hammer away at the Speaker down below, with more heat than warmth.

He had seen nine hundred wild beasts fed with peppered tongue, in a menagerie called *L'Assemblée Nationale.*

His ears had rung often enough, for that matter.

This time his heart beat.

He had been in the principal Courts of Europe: knew what a handful of gentlefolks call "the World:" had experienced the honeyed words of courtiers; the misty nothings of diplomatists; and the innocent prattle of mighty kings.

But hitherto he seemed to have undergone gibberish and jargon;—

Gibberish and jargon—Political!
Gibberish and jargon—Social!
Gibberish and jargon—Theological!
Gibberish and jargon—Positive!

People had been prating—Jess had spoken.

But, it is to be observed, he was under the double effect of eloquence and novelty; and, so situated, we overrate things, you know.

That night he made a provision for this poor woman, in case he should die before next week.

"Who knows," said he, "she is such an unlucky woman."

Then he went to bed, and whether from the widow's blessing, or the air of the place, he slept like a ploughboy.

Leaving Richard, Lord Ipsden, to work out the Aberford problem—to relieve poor people, one or two of whom, like the Rutherford, were grateful, the rest acted it to the life—to receive now and then a visit from Christina Johnstone, who borrowed every mortal book in his house, who sold him fish, invariably cheated him by the indelible force of habit, and then remorsefully undid the bargain, with a peevish entreaty that "he would not be so green, for there was no doing business with him,"—to be fastened upon by Flucker, who, with admirable smoothness and cunning, wormed himself into cabin-boy on board the yacht, and man-at-alms ashore.

To cruise in search of adventures, and meet nothing but disappointments; to acquire a browner tint, a lighter step, and a jacket, our story moves for a while towards humbler personages.

CHAPTER IV

Jess Rutherford, widow of Alexander Johnstone, for Newhaven wives, like great artists, change their conditions without changing their names, was known in the town only as a dour wife, a sour old carline. Whose fault?

Do wooden faces and iron tongues tempt sorrow to put out its snails' horns?

She hardly spoke to any one, or any one to her, but four days after the visit we have described, people began to bend looks of sympathy on her, to step out of their way to give her a kindly good-morrow; after a bit, fish and meal used to be placed on her table by one neighbour or another, when she was out; and so on. She was at first behind-hand in respond-

ing to all this, but by degrees she thawed to those who were thawing to her. Next, Saunders called on her, and showed her a settlement, made for her benefit, on certain lands in Lanarkshire. She was at ease for life.

The Almighty had seen her all these years.

But how came her neighbours to melt?

Because a nobleman had visited her.

Not exactly, dear novel-reader.

This was it.

That same night, by a bright fire lighting up snowy walls, burnished copper, gleaming candlesticks, and a dinner-table floor, sat the mistress of the house, Christie Johnstone, and her brother, Flucker.

She with a book, he with his reflections opposite her.

"Lassie, hae ye ony siller past ye?"

"Aye, lad; an' I mean to keep it!"

The baddish boy had registered a vow to the contrary, and proceeded to bleed his flint (for to do Christie justice the process was not very dissimilar). Flucker had a versatile genius for making money; he had made it in forty different ways, by land and sea, tenpence at a time.

"I hae gotten the life o' Jess Rutherford till ye," said he.

"Giest then."

"I'm seeking half-a-crown for 't," said he.

Now, he knew he should never get half-a-crown, but he also knew that if he asked a shilling, he should be beaten down to fourpence.

So half-a-crown was his first bode.

The enemy, with anger at her heart, called up a humorous smile, and saying "an ye'll get saxpence," went about some household matter; in reality, to let her proposal rankle in Flucker.

Flucker lighted his pipe slowly, as one who would not do a sister the injustice to notice so trivial a proposition.

He waited fresh overtures.

They did not come.

Christie resumed her book.

Then the baddish boy fixed his eye on the fire, and said softly and thoughtfully to the fire, "Hech, what a heap o' troubles yon woman has come through."

This stroke of art was not lost. Christie looked up from her book; pretended he had spoken to her, gave a fictitious yawn, and renewed the negotiation with the air of one disposed to kill time.

She was dying for the story.

Commerce was twice broken off, and renewed by each power in turn.

At last the bargain was struck at fourteenpence.

Then Flucker came out, the honest merchant.

He had listened intently, with mercantile views.

He had the widow's sorrows all off pat.

He was not a bit affected himself, but by pure memory he remembered where she had been most agitated or overcome.

He gave it Christie, word for word, and even threw in what dramatists call "the business," thus—

"Here ye suld greet——"

"Here ye'll play your hand like a geraffe."

"Geraffe? That's a beast, I'm thinking."

"Na; it's the thing on the hill that maks signals."

"Telegraph, ye fulish goloshen!"

"Oo ay, telegraph! Geraffe's sunest said for a'."

Thus Jess Rutherford's life came into Christie Johnstone's hands.

She told it to a knot of the natives next day; it cost nothing, for she was a woman of feeling, and by intuition an artist of the tongue. She was the best *raconteur* in a place where there are a hundred male and female, who attempt that art.

The next day she told it again, and then inferior narrators got hold of it, and it soon circulated through the town.

And this was the cause of the sudden sympathy with Jess Rutherford.

As our prigs would say—

"Art had adopted her cause and adorned her tale."

CHAPTER V

THE fishing village of Newhaven is an unique place; it is a colony that retains distinct features; the people seldom intermarry with their Scotch neighbours.

Some say the colony is Dutch, some Danish, some Flemish. The character and cleanliness of their female costume points rather to the latter.

Fish, like horse-flesh, corrupts the mind and manners.

After a certain age, the Newhaven fishwife is always a blackguard, and ugly; but among the younger specimens, who have not traded too much, or come into much contact with

larger towns, a charming modesty, or else slyness (such as no man can distinguish from it, so it answers every purpose), is to be found, combined with rare grace and beauty.

It is a race of women that the northern sun peachifies instead of rosewoodising.

On Sundays the marjority sacrifice appearance to fashion; these turn out rainbows of silk, satin, and lace. In the week they were all grace, and no stays; now they seem all stays, and no grace. They never look so ill as when they change their "costume" for "dress."

The men are smart fishermen, distinguished from the other fishermen of the Firth chiefly by their "dredging song."

This old song is money to them—thus,

Dredging is practically very stiff rowing for ten hours.

Now both the Newhaven men, and their rivals, are agreed that this song lifts them through more work than untuned fishermen can manage.

I have heard the song, and seen the work done to it; and incline to think it helps the oar, not only by keeping the time true, and the spirit alive, but also by its favourable action on the lungs. It is sung in a peculiar way; the sound is, as it were, expelled from the chest in a sort of musical ejaculations; and the like, we know, was done by the ancient gymnasts; and is done by French bakers, in lifting their enormous dough, and by our paviours.

The song, in itself, does not contain above seventy stock verses, but these perennial lines are a nucleus, round which the men improvise the topics of the day, giving, I know not for what reason, the preference to such as verge upon indelicacy.

The men and women are musical and narrative; three out of four can sing a song or tell a story, and they omit few opportunities.

Males and females suck whiskey like milk, and are quarrelsome in proportion: the men fight (round handed), the women fleicht or scold, in the form of a tea-pot,—the handle fixed and the spout sawing the air.

A singular custom prevails here—

The maidens have only one sweetheart apiece!!!

So the whole town is in pairs.

The courting is all done on Saturday night, by the lady's fire. It is hard to keep out of a groove in which all the town is running; and the Johnstone had possessed, as mere property —a lad!

She was so wealthy that few of them could pretend to aspire

to her, so she selected for her chattel a young man called Willy Liston; a youth of an unhappy turn—he contributed nothing to hilarity, his face was a kill-joy—nobody liked him; for this female reason Christie distinguished him.

He found a divine supper every Saturday night, in her house; he ate, and sighed! Christie fed him, and laughed at him.

Flucker ditto.

As she neither fed not laughed at any other man, some twenty were bitterly jealous of Willy Liston, and this gave the blighted youth a cheerful moment or two.

But the bright alliance received a check some months before our tale.

Christie was *helluo librorum!* and like others who have that taste, and can only gratify it in the interval of manual exercise, she read very intensely in her hours of study. A book absorbed her. She was like a leech on these occasions, *non missura cutem:* even Jean Carnie, her coadjutor or "neebor," as they call it, found it best to keep out of her way till the book was sucked.

One Saturday night Willy Liston's evil star ordained that a gentleman of French origin and Spanish dress, called Gil Blas, should be the Johnstone's companion.

Willy Liston arrived.

Christie, who had bolted the door, told him from the window, civilly enough, but decidedly, "She would excuse his company that night."

"Vara weel," said Willy, and departed.

Next Saturday—no Willy came.

Ditto the next. Willy was waiting the *amende.*

Christie forgot to make it.

One day she was passing the boats, Willy beckoned her mysteriously; he led her to his boat, which was called "The Christie Johnstone;" by the boat's side was a paint pot and brush.

They had not supped together for five Saturdays.

Ergo, Mr. Liston had painted out the four first letters of "Christie," he now proceeded to paint out the fifth, giving her to understand, that if she allowed the whole name to go, a letter every blank Saturday, her image would be gradually, but effectually, obliterated from the heart Listonian.

My reader has done, what Liston did not, anticipate her answer. She recommended him, whilst his hand was in, to paint out the entire name, and with white paint and a smaller brush, to substitute some other female appellation. So saying, she tripped off.

Mr. Liston on this was guilty of the following inconsistency; he pressed the paint carefully out of the brush into the pot: having thus economised his material, he hurled the pot which contained his economy, at "tie Johnstone," he then adjourned to the "Peacock," and "away at once with love and reason."

Thenceforth, when men asked who was Christie Johnstone's lad, the answer used to be, "She's seeking ane." *Quelle horreur!!*

Newhaven doesn't know everything, but my intelligent reader suspects, and if confirming his suspicions can reconcile him to our facts, it will soon be done.

But he must come with us to Edinburgh; it's only three miles.

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE band of painters came into Edinburgh from a professional walk. Three were of Edinburgh: Groove, aged fifty; Jones and Hyacinth, young; the latter long-haired.

With them was a young Englishman, the leader of the expedition—Charles Gatty.

His step was elastic, and his manner wonderfully animated, without loudness.

"A bright day," said he. "The sun forgot where he was, and shone; everything was in favour of art."

"Oh dear, no," replied old Groove, "not where I was."

"Why, what was the matter?"

"The flies kept buzzing and biting, and sticking in the work: that's the worst of out o' doors!"

"The flies! is that all? Swear the spiders in special constables next time," cried Gatty. "We shall win the day:" and light shot into his hazel eye.

"The world will not always put up with the humbugs of the brush, who, to imitate nature, turn their back on her. Paint an out o' door scene in doors. I swear by the sun it's a lie! the one stupid, impudent lie, that glitters amongst the lies of vulgar art, like Satan amongst Belial, Mammon, and all those beggars.

"Now look here; the barren outlines of a scene must be looked at, to be done; hence the sketching system slop-sellers of the Academy! but the million delicacies of light, shade, and colour, can be trusted to memory, can they?"

"It's a lie big enough to shake the earth out of her course;

if any part of the work could be trusted to memory or imagination, it happens to be the bare outlines, and they can't. The million subtleties of light and colour; learn them by heart, and say them off on canvas! the highest angel in the sky must have his eye upon them, and look devilish sharp, too, or he sha'n't paint them: I give him Charles Gatty's word for that."

"That's very eloquent, I call it," said Jones.

"Yes," said poor old Groove, "the lad will never make a painter."

"Yes, I shall, Groove; at least I hope so, but it must be a long time first."

"I never knew a painter who could talk and paint both," explained Mr. Groove.

"Very well," said Gatty. "Then I'll say but one word more, and it is this. The artifice of painting is old enough to die; it is time the art was born. Whenever it does come into the world, you will see no more dead corpses of trees, grass, and water, robbed of their life, the sun-light, and flung upon canvas in a studio, by the light of a cigar, and a lie and——"

"How much do you expect for your picture?" interrupted Jones.

"What has that to do with it? With these little swords" (waving his brush), "we'll fight for nature-light, truth-light, and sun-light, against a world in arms,—no, worse, in swaddling-clothes."

"With these little swerrds," replied poor old Groove, "we shall cut our own throats if we go against people's prejudices."

The young artist laughed the old daubster a merry defiance, and then separated from the party, for his lodgings were down the street.

He had not left them long, before a most musical voice was heard, crying—

"A caallerr owoo!"

And two young fishwives hove in sight.

The boys recognised one of them as Gatty's sweetheart.

"Is he in love with her?" inquired Jones.

Hyacinth the long-haired undertook to reply.

"He loves her better than anything in the world, except Art. Love and Art are two beautiful things," whined Hyacinth.

"She, too, is beautiful. I have done her," added he, with a simper.

"In oil?" asked Groove.

"In oil? no, in verse, here," and he took out a paper.

"Then hadn't we better cut, you might propose reading them," said poor old Groove.

"Have you any oysters?" inquired Jones of the Carnie and the Johnstone, who were now alongside.

"Plenty," answered Jean. "Hae ye ony siller?"

The artists looked at one another, and didn't all speak at once.

"I, madam," said old Groove insinuatingly to Christie, "am a friend of Mr. Gatty's: perhaps, on that account, you would *lend* me an oyster or two."

"Na," said Jean sternly.

"Hyacinth," said Jones sarcastically, "give them your verses, perhaps that will soften them."

Hyacinth gave his verses, descriptive of herself, to Christie.

This youngster was one of those who mind other people's business.

Alienis studiis delectatus contempsit suum.

His destiny was to be a bad painter, so he wanted to be an execrable poet.

All this morning he had been doggrelling, when he ought to have been daubing; and now he will have to sup off a coloured print, if he sups at all.

Christie read, blushed, and put the verses in her bosom.

"Come awa, Custy," said Jean.

"Hets," said Christie, "gie the puir lads twarree oysters, what the waur will we be?"

So they opened oysters for them; and Hyacinth the long-haired looked down on the others with sarcastico-benignant superiority. He had conducted a sister art to the aid of his brother brushes.

> "The poet's empire, all our hearts allow;
> But doggrel's power was never known till now."

CHAPTER VII

At the commencement of last chapter, Charles Gatty, artist, was going to usher in a new state of things, true art, etc. Wales was to be painted in Wales, not Poland Street.

He and five or six more youngsters were to be in the foremost files of truth, and take the world by storm.

This was at two o'clock! it is now five; whereupon the

posture of affairs, the prospects of art, the face of the world, the nature of things, are quite the reverse.

In the artist's room, on the floor, was a small child, whose movements, and they were many, were viewed with huge dissatisfaction by Charles Gatty, Esq. This personage, pencil in hand, sat slouching and morose, looking gloomily at his intractable model.

Things were going on very badly; he had been waiting two hours for an infantine pose, as common as dirt, and the little viper would die first.

Out of doors everything was nothing, for the sun was obscured, and to all appearance extinguished for ever.

"Ah! Mr. Groove," cried he, to that worthy, who peeped in at that moment; "you are right, it is better to plough away upon canvas blindfold, as our grandfathers—no, grandmothers, used, than to kill ourselves, toiling after such coy ladies as Nature and Truth."

"Aweel, I dinna ken, sirr," replied Groove, in smooth tones. "I didna like to express my warm approbation of you before the lads, for fear of making them jealous."

"They be——no!"

"I ken what ye wad say, sirr, an it wad hae been a vara just an sprightly observaation. Aweel, between oursels, I look upon ye as a young gentleman of amazing talent and moedesty. Man, ye dinna do yoursel justice; ye should be in th' Academy—at the hede o't."

"Mr. Groove, I am a poor fainting pilgrim on the road, where stronger spirits have marched erect before me."

"A faintin' pelgrim? Deil a frights o' ye, ye're a brisk and bonny lad. Ah, sirr, in my juvenile days, we didna fash wi' nature, and truth, an' the like."

"The like! What is like nature and truth, except themselves?"

"Vara true, sirr; vara true, and say I doot I will never attain the height o' profeeciency ye hae reached. An' at this vara moment, sir," continued Groove, with delicious solemnity and mystery, "ye see before ye, sir, a man wha is in maist dismal want—o' ten shellen!"—(A pause.)—"If your superior talent has put ye in possession of that sum, ye would obleege me infinitely by a temporary accommodaation, Mr. Gaattie."

"Why did you not come to the point at once?" cried Gatty brusquely, "instead of humbling me with undeserved praise. There."—Groove held out his hand, but made a wry face when, instead of money, Gatty put a sketch into his hand.

"There," said Gatty, "that is a lie!"

"How can it be a lee?" said the other, with sour inadvertence. "How can it be a lee, when I hae na spoken?"

"You don't understand me. That sketch is a libel on a poor cow and an unfortunate oak tree. I did them at the Academy. They had never done me any wrong, poor things; they suffered unjustly. You take them to a shop, swear they are a tree and a cow, and some fool, that never really looked into a cow or a tree, will give you ten shillings for them."

"Are ye sure, lad?"

"I am sure. Mr. Groove, sir, if you cannot sell a lie for ten shillings, you are not fit to live in this world; where is the lie that will not sell for ten shillings?"

"I shall think the better o' lees all my days; sir, your words are inspeeriting." And away went Groove with the sketch.

Gatty reflected, and stopped him.

"On second thoughts, Groove, you must not ask ten shillings; you must ask twenty pounds for that rubbish."

"Twenty pund! What for will I seek twenty pund?"

"Simply because people that would not give you ten shillings for it will offer you eleven pounds for it if you ask twenty pounds."

"The fules," roared Groove. "Twenty punds, hem!" He looked closer into it. "For a'," said he, "I begin to obsairve it is a work of great merit. I'll seek twenty pund; an' I'll no tak less than fifteen schelln, at present."

The visit of this routine painter did not cheer our artist.

The small child got a coal, and pounded the floor with it, like a machine incapable of fatigue. So the wished-for pose seemed more remote than ever.

The day waxed darker, instead of lighter; Mr. Gatty's reflections took also a still more sombre hue.

"Even Nature spites us," thought he, "because we love her."

"Then cant, tradition, numbers, slang, and money are against us; the least of these is singly a match for truth; we shall die of despair or paint cobwebs in Bedlam; and I am faint, weary of a hopeless struggle; and one man's brush is truer than mine, another's is bolder—my hand and eye are not in tune. Ah! no! I shall never, never, never be a painter."

These last words broke audibly from him, as his head went down almost to his knees.

A hand was placed on his shoulder, as a flake of snow falls on the water. It was Christie Johnstone, radiant, who had glided in unobserved.

"What's wrang wi ye, my lad?"

"The sun is gone to the devil, for one thing."

"Hech! hech! ye'll no be long ahint him; div ye no think shame?"

"And I want that little brute just to do so, and he'd die first."

"Oh! ye villain, to ca' a bairn a brute; there's but ae brute here, an it's no you, Jamie, nor me,—is it, my lamb?"

She then stepped to the window.

"It's clear to windward; in ten minutes ye'll hae plenty sun. Tak your tools noo." And at the word she knelt on the floor, whipped out a paper of sugar-plums, and said to him she had christened "Jamie,"—"Heh! Here's sweeties till ye." Out went Jamie's arms, as if he had been a machine, and she had pulled the right string.

"Ah, that will do," said Gatty, and sketched away.

Unfortunately Jamie was quickly arrested on the way to immortality by his mother, who came in, saying—

"I maun hae my bairn,—he canna be aye wasting his time here."

This sally awakened the satire that ever lies ready in piscatory bosoms.

"Wasting his time! ye're no blate. Oh, ye'll be for taking him to the college to laern pheesick—and teach maenners."

"Ye needna begin on me," said the woman. "I'm no match for Newhaven."

So saying she cut short the dispute by carrying off the gristle of contention.

"Another enemy to art," said Gatty, hurling away his pencil.

The young fishwife inquired if there were any more griefs: what she had heard had not accounted, to her reason, for her companion's depression.

"Are ye sick, laddy?" said she.

"No, Christie, not sick, but quite, quite down in the mouth."

She scanned him thirty seconds.

"What had ye till your dinner?"

"I forget."

"A choep, likely?"

"I think it was."

"Or maybe it was a steak?"

"I dare say it was a steak."

"Taste my girdle cake, that I've brought for ye."

She gave him a piece; he ate it rapidly, and looked gratefully at her.

"Noo, div ye no think shame to look me in the face? Ye hae na dined ava." And she wore an injured look.

"Sit ye there; it's ower late for dinner, but ye'll get a cup tea: doon i' the mooth, nae wonder, when naething gangs doon your——"

In a minute she placed a tea-tray, and ran into the kitchen with a tea-pot.

The next moment a yell was heard, and she returned laughing, with another tea-pot.

"The wife had maskit her tea till hersel'," said this lawless forager.

Tea and cake on the table—beauty seated by his side—all in less than a minute.

He offered her a piece of cake.

"Na! I am no for any."

"Nor I, then," said he.

"Hets! eat, I tell ye."

He replied by putting a bit to her heavenly mouth.

"Ye're awfu' opinionated," said she, with a countenance that said nothing should induce her, and eating it almost contemporaneously.

"Put plenty sugar," added she, referring to the Chinese infusion; "mind, I hae a sweet tooth."

"You have a sweet set," said he, approaching another morsel.

They showed themselves by way of smile, and confirmed the accusation.

"Aha! lad," answered she; "they've been the death o' mony a herrin'!"

"Now, what does that mean in English, Christie?"

"My grinders—(a full stop).

"Which you approve—(a full stop).

"Have been fatal—(a full stop).

"To many fishes!"

Christie prided herself on her English, which she had culled from books.

Then he made her drink from the cup, and was ostentatious in putting his lips to the same part of the brim.

Then she left the table, and inspected all things.

She came to his drawers, opened one, and was horror-struck.

There were coats and trousers, with their limbs interchangeably intertwined, waistcoats, shirts, and cigars, hurled into chaos.

She instantly took the drawer bodily out, brought it, leaned it against the tea-table, pointed silently into it, with an air of majestic reproach, and awaited the result.

I can find whatever I want," said the unblushing bachelor, "except money."

"Siller does na bide wi' slovens! hae ye often siccan a gale o' wind in your drawer?"

"Every day! Speak English!"

"Aweel! How *do* you *do*? that's English! I daur say."

"Jolly!" cried he, with his mouth full.

Christie was now folding up and neatly arranging his clothes.

"Will you ever, ever be a painter?"

"I am a painter! I could paint the devil pea-green!"

"Dinna speak o' yon lad, Chairles, it's no canny."

"No! I am going to paint an angel; the prettiest, cleverest girl in Scotland, 'The Snowdrop of the North.'"

And he dashed into his bedroom to find a canvas.

"Hech!" reflected Christie. "Thir Ennglish hae flattering tongues, as sure as Dethe; 'The Snawdrap o' the Norrth!'"

CHAPTER VIII

GATTY'S back was hardly turned when a visitor arrived, and inquired, "Is Mr. Gatty at home?"

"What's your will wi' him?" was the Scottish reply.

"Will you give him this?"

"What est?"

"Are you fond of asking questions?" inquired the man.

"Ay! and fules canna answer them," retorted Christie.

The little document which the man, in retiring, left with Christie Johnstone, purported to come from one Victoria, who seemed, at first sight, disposed to show Charles Gatty civilities. "Victoria—to Charles Gatty, greeting! (salutem)." Christie was much struck with this instance of royal affability; she read no farther, but began to think, "Victoree! that's the Queen hersel'. A letter fra the Queen to a painter lad! Picters will rise i' the market—it will be an order to paint the bairns. I hae brought him luck; I am real pleased." And on Gatty's return, canvas in hand, she whipped the document behind her, and said archly, "I hae something for ye, a tecket fra a leddy, ye'll no want siller fra this day."

"Indeed!"

"Ay! indeed, fra a great leddy; it's vara gude o' me to gie ye it; heh! tak it."

He did take it, looked stupefied, looked again, sunk into a chair, and glared at it.

"Laddy!" said Christie.

"This is a new step on the downward path," said the poor painter.

"Is it no an orrder to paint the young Prence?" said Christie faintly.

"No!" almost shrieked the victim. "It's a writ! I owe a lot of money."

"Oh, Chairles!"

"See! I borrowed sixty pounds six months ago of a friend, so now I owe eighty!"

"All right!" giggled the unfriendly visitor at the door, whose departure had been more or less fictitious.

Christie, by an impulse, not justifiable, but natural, drew her oyster-knife out, and this time the man really went away.

"Hairtless mon!" cried she, "could he no do his ain dirrty work, and no gar me gie the puir lad th' action, and he likeit me sae weel!" and she began to whimper.

"And love you more now," said he; "don't you cry, dear, to add to my vexation."

"Na! I'll no add to your vexation," and she gulped down her tears.

"Besides, I have pictures painted worth two hundred pounds; this is only for eighty. To be sure you can't sell them for two hundred pence when you want. So I shall go to jail, but they won't keep me long."

Then he took a turn, and began to fall into the artistic, or true view of matters, which, indeed, was never long absent from him.

"Look here, Christie," said he, "I am sick of conventional assassins, humbugging models, with dirty beards, that knit their brows, and try to look murder; they never murdered so much as a tom-cat: I always go in for the real thing, and here I shall find it."

"Dinna gang in there, lad, for ony favour."

"Then I shall find the accessories of a picture I have in my head—chains with genuine rust, and ancient mouldering stones, with the stains of time." His eye brightened at the prospect.

"You among fiefs, and chains, and stanes! Ye'll break my hairt, laddy, ye'll no be easy till you break my hairt;" and this time the tears would not be denied.

"I love you for crying; don't cry;" and he fished from the chaotic drawer a cambric handkerchief, with which he dried her tears as they fell.

It is my firm belief she cried nearly twice as much as she

really wanted to; she contrived to make the grief hers, the sympathy his. Suddenly she stopped, and said—

"I'm daft; ye'll accept a lane o' the siller fra me, will ye no?"

"No!" said he. "And where could you find eighty pound?"

"Auchty pund," cried she, "it's no auchty pund that will ding Christie Johnstone, laddy. I hae boats and nets worth twa auchtys; and I hae forty pund laid by; and I hae seven hundred pund at London, but that I canna meddle. My feyther lent it the King or the Queen, I dinna justly mind; she pays me the interest twice the year. Sae ye ken I could na be sae dirty as seek my siller, when she pays me th' interest: to the very day, ye ken. She's just the only one o' a' my debtors that's hoenest, but never heed, ye'll no gang to jail."

"I'll hold my tongue, and sacrifice my pictures," thought Charles.

"Cheer up!" said Christie, mistaking the nature of his thoughts, "for it didna come fra Victoree hersel'. It wad smell o' the musk, ye ken. Na, it's just a wheen blackguards at London that makes use o' her name to torment puir folk. Wad she pairsecute a puir lad? No likely."

She then asked questions, some of which were embarrassing. One thing he could never succeed in making her understand, how, since it was sixty pounds he borrowed, it could be eighty pounds he owed.

Then once more she promised him her protection, bade him be of good cheer, and left him.

At the door she turned, and said, "Chairles, here's an auld wife seeking ye," and vanished.

These two young people had fallen acquainted at a Newhaven wedding. Christie, belonging to no one, had danced with him all the night, they had walked under the stars to cool themselves, for dancing reels, with heart and soul, is not quadrilling.

Then he had seen his beautiful partner in Edinburgh, and made a sketch of her, which he gave her; and by-and-by he used to run down to Newhaven, and stroll up and down a certain green lane near the town.

Next, on Sunday evenings, a long walk together, and then it came to visits at his place now and then.

And here Raphael and Fornarina were inverted, our artist used to work, and Christie tell him stories the while.

And as her voice curled round his heart, he used to smile and look, and lay inspired touches on his subject.

And she, an artist of the tongue (without knowing herself one), used to make him grave, or gay, or sad, at will, and

watch the effect of her art upon his countenance; and a very pretty art it is—the *vivâ voce* storytellers—and a rare one amongst the nations of Europe.

Christie had not learned it in a day; when she began, she used to tell them like the other Newhaven people, with a noble impartiality of detail, wearisome to the hearer.

But latterly she had learned to seize the salient parts of a narrative; her voice had compass, and, like all fine speakers, she travelled over a great many notes in speaking; her low tones were gorgeously rich, her upper tones full and sweet; all this, and her beauty, made the hours she gave him very sweet to our poor artist.

He was wont to bask in her music, and tell her in return how he loved her, and how happy they were both to be as soon as he had acquired a name, for a name was wealth, he told her. And although Christie Johnstone did not let him see how much she took all this to heart and believed it, it was as sweet music to her, as her own honeysuckle breath to him.

She improved him.

He dropped cigars, and medical students, and similar abominations.

Christie's cool, fresh breath, as she hung over him while painting, suggested to him that smoking might, peradventure, be a sin against nature as well as against cleanliness.

And he improved her; she learned from art to look into nature (the usual process of mind).

She had noticed too little the flickering gold of the leaves at evening, the purple hills, and the shifting stories and glories of the sky; but now, whatever she saw him try to imitate, she learned to examine. She was a woman, and admired sunset, etc., for this boy's sake, and her whole heart expanded with a new sensation that softened her manner to all the world, and brightened her personal rays.

This charming picture of mutual affection had hitherto been admired only by those who figured in it.

But a visitor had now arrived on purpose to inspect it, etc., attracted by report.

A friend had considerately informed Mrs. Gatty, the artist's mother, and she had instantly started from Newcastle.

This was the old lady Christie discovered on the stairs.

Her sudden appearance took her son's breath away.

No human event was less likely than that she should be there, yet there she was.

After the first surprise and affectionate greetings, a mis-

giving crossed him, "she must know about the writ"—it was impossible; but our minds are so constituted—when we are guilty, we fear that others know what we know.

Now Gatty was particularly anxious she should not know about this writ, for he had incurred the debt by acting against her advice.

Last year he commenced a picture in which was Durham Cathedral; his mother bade him stay quietly at home, and paint the cathedral and its banks from a print, "as any other painter would," observed she.

But this was not the lad's system; he spent five months on the spot, and painted his picture, but he had to borrow sixty pounds to do this; the condition of this loan was, that in six months he should either pay eighty pounds, or finish, and hand over, a certain half-finished picture.

He did neither; his new subject thrust aside his old one, and he had no money, ergo his friend, a picture-dealer, who had found artists slippery in money matters, followed him up sharp, as we see.

"There is nothing the matter, I hope, mother. What is it?"

"I'm tired, Charles." He brought her a seat: she sat down.

"I did not come from Newcastle at my age, for nothing; you have formed an improper acquaintance."

"I, who? Is it Jack Adams?"

"Worse than any Jack Adams!"

"Who can that be? Jenkyns, mother, because he does the same things as Jack, and pretends to be religious."

"It is a female—a fishwife. Oh, my son!"

"Christie Johnstone an improper acquaintance," said he; "why! I was good for nothing till I knew her; she has made me so good, mother; so steady, so industrious; you will never have to find fault with me again."

"Nonsense:—a woman that sells fish in the streets!"

"But you have not seen her. She is beautiful, her mind is not in fish; her mind grasps the beautiful and the good—she is a companion for princes! What am I that she wastes a thought or a ray of music on me? Heaven bless her. She reads our best authors, and never forgets a word; and she tells me beautiful stories—sometimes they make me cry, for her voice is a music that goes straight to my heart."

"A woman that does not even wear the clothes of a lady."

"It is the only genuine costume in these islands not beneath a painter's notice."

"Look at me, Charles; at your mother."

"Yes, mother," said he nervously.

"You must part with her, or kill me."

He started from his seat and began to flutter up and down the room; poor excitable creature. "Part with her!" cried he; "I shall never be a painter if I do: what is to keep my heart warm when the sun is hid, when the birds are silent, when difficulty looks a mountain, and success a molehill? What is an artist without love? How is he to bear up against his disappointments from within, his mortifications from without? the great ideas he has and cannot grasp, and all the forms of ignorance that sting him, from stupid insensibility down to clever, shallow criticism?"

"Come back to common sense," said the old lady coldly and grimly.

He looked uneasy: common sense had often been quoted against him, and common sense had always proved right.

"Come back to common sense. She shall not be your mistress, and she cannot bear your name; you must part some day, because you cannot come together, and now is the best time."

"Not be together? all our lives, all our lives, ay," cried he, rising into enthusiasm, "hundreds of years to come will we two be together before men's eyes—I will be an immortal painter, that the world and time may cherish the features I have loved. I love her, mother," added he, with a tearful tenderness that ought to have reached a woman's heart; then flushing, trembling, and inspired he burst out, "And I wish I was a sculptor and a poet too, that Christie might live in stone and verse, as well as colours, and all who love an art might say, 'This woman cannot die, Charles Gatty loved her.'"

He looked in her face, he could not believe any creature could be insensible to his love, and persist to rob him of it.

The old woman paused, to let his eloquence evaporate.

The pause chilled him; then gently and slowly, but emphatically, she spoke to him thus—

"Who has kept you on her small means ever since you were ten years and seven months old?"

"You should know, mother, dear mother."

"Answer me, Charles."

"My mother."

"Who has pinched herself, in every earthly thing, to make you an immortal painter, and, above all, a gentleman?"

"My mother."

"Who forgave you the little faults of youth, before you could ask pardon?"

"My mother! Oh, mother, I ask pardon now for all the trouble I ever gave the best, the dearest, the tenderest of mothers."

"Who will go home to Newcastle, a broken-hearted woman, with the one hope gone that has kept her up in poverty and sorrow so many weary years, if this goes on?"

"Nobody, I hope."

"Yes, Charles; your mother."

"Oh, mother; you have been always my best friend."

"And am this day."

"Do not be my worst enemy now: it is for me to obey you; but it is for you to think well before you drive me to despair."

And the poor womanish heart leaned his head on the table, and began to sorrow over his hard fate.

Mrs. Gatty soothed him. "It need not be done all in a moment—it must be done kindly, but firmly. I will give you as much time as you like."

This bait took—the weak love to temporise.

It is doubtful whether he honestly intended to part with Christie Johnstone, but to pacify his mother, he promised to begin and gradually untie the knot.

"My mother will go," whispered the deceitful heart, "and when she is away, perhaps I shall find out that in spite of every effort I cannot resign my treasure."

He gave a sort of half-promise for the sake of peace.

His mother instantly sent to the inn for her boxes.

"There is a room in this same house," said she, "I will take it; I will not hurry you, but until it is done, I stay here—if it is a twelvemonth about."

He turned pale.

"And now hear the good news I have brought you from Newcastle."

Oh! these little iron wills, how is a great artist to fight three hundred and sixty-five days against such an antagonist?

Every day saw a repetition of these dialogues in which genius made gallant bursts into the air, and strong, hard sense, caught him on his descent, and dabbed glue on his gauzy wings.

Old age and youth see life so differently.

To youth it is a story-book, in which we are to command the incidents, and be the bright exceptions to one rule after another.

To age it is an almanack, in which everything will happen just as it has happened so many times.

To youth, it is a path through a sunny meadow.

To age, a hard turnpike:

Whose travellers must be all sweat and dust, when they are not in mud and drenched:

Which wants mending in many places, and is mended with sharp stones.

Gatty would not yield to go down to Newhaven, and take a step against his love, but he yielded so far as to remain passive, and see whether this creature was necessary to his existence or not.

Mrs. G. scouted the idea.

"He was to work, and he would soon forget her."

Poor boy! he wanted to work; his debt weighed on him; a week's resolute labour might finish his first picture and satisfy his creditor. The subject was an interior. He set to work, he stuck to work, he glued to work, his body—but his heart?

Ah, my poor fellow, a much slower horse than Gatty will go by you, ridden as you are by a leaden heart.

Tu nihil invitâ facies pingesve Minervâ.

It would not lower a mechanical dog's efforts, but it must yours.

He was unhappy. He heard only one side for days; that side was recommended by his duty, filial affection, and diffidence of his own good sense.

He was brought to see his proceedings were eccentric, and that it is destruction to be eccentric.

He was made a little ashamed of what he had been proud of.

He was confused and perplexed; he hardly knew what to think or do; he collapsed, and all his spirit was fast leaving him, and then he felt inclined to lean on the first thing he could find, and nothing came to hand but his mother.

Meantime, Christie Johnstone was also thinking of him, but her single anxiety was to find this eighty pounds for him.

It is a Newhaven idea that the female is the natural protector of the male, and this idea was strengthened in her case.

She did not fully comprehend his character and temperament, but she saw, by instinct, that she was to be the protector.

Besides, as she was twenty-one, and he only twenty-two, she felt the difference between herself—a woman, and him—a boy, and to leave him to struggle unaided out of his difficulties, seemed to her heartless.

Twice she opened her lips to engage the charitable "Vile

Count" in his cause, but shame closed them again; this would be asking a personal favour, and one on so large a scale.

Several days passed thus; she had determined not to visit him without good news.

She then began to be surprised, she heard nothing from him.

And now she felt something that prevented her calling on him.

But Jean Carnie was to be married, and the next day the wedding party were to spend in festivity upon the island of Inch Coombe.

She bade Jean call on him, and without mentioning her, invite him to this party, from which, he must know, she would not be absent.

Jean Carnie entered his apartment, and at her entrance, his mother, who took for granted this was his sweetheart, whispered in his ear that he should now take the first step, and left him.

What passed between Jean Carnie and Charles Gatty is for another chapter.

CHAPTER IX

A YOUNG Viscount with income and person cannot lie *perdu* three miles from Edinburgh.

First one discovers him, then another, then twenty, then all the world, as the whole clique is modestly called.

Before, however, Lord Ipsden was caught, he had acquired a browner tint, a more elastic step, and a stouter heart.

The Aberford prescription had done wonders for him.

He caught himself passing one whole day without thinking of Lady Barbara Sinclair.

But even Aberford had misled him; there were no adventures to be found in the Firth of Forth; most of the days there was no wind to speak of; twice it blew great guns, and the men were surprised at his Lordship going out, but nobody was in any danger except himself; the fishermen had all slipped into port before matters were serious.

He found the merchantmen that could sail creeping on with three reefs in their mainsail; and the Dutchmen lying to and breasting it, like ducks in a pond, and with no more chance of harm.

On one of these occasions he did observe a little steam-tug, going about a knot an hour, and rolling like a washing-tub.

He ran down to her, and asked if he could assist her; she answered through the medium of a sooty animal at her helm, that she was (like our universities) "satisfied with her own progress;" she added, being under intoxication, "That if any danger existed, her scheme was to drown it in the bo-o-owl;" and two days afterwards, he saw her puffing and panting, and fiercely dragging a gigantic three-decker out into deep water, like an industrious flea pulling his phaeton.

And now it is my office to relate how Mr. Flucker Johnstone comported himself on one occasion.

As the yacht worked alongside Granton Pier, before running out, the said Flucker, calmly and scientifically, drew his Lordship's attention to three points:

The direction of the wind—the force of the wind—and his opinion, as a person experienced in the Firth, that it was going to be worse instead of better; in reply, he received an order to step forward to his place in the cutter—the immediate vicinity of the jib-boom. On this Mr. Flucker instantly burst into tears.

His Lordship, or as Flucker called him, ever since the yacht came down, "the Skipper," deeming that the higher appellation, inquired, with some surprise, what was the matter with the boy?

One of the crew, who, by-the-by, squinted, suggested "it was a slight illustration of the passion of fear."

Flucker confirmed the theory by gulping out, "We'll never see Newhaven again."

On this the Skipper smiled, and ordered him ashore, somewhat peremptorily.

Straightway he began to howl, and saying "It was better to be drowned than be the laughing-stock of the place," went forward to his place; on his safe return to port, this young gentleman was very severe on open boats, which he said "bred womanish notions in hearts naturally dauntless.—Give me a lid to the pot," added he, "and I'll sail with Old Nick, let the wind blow high or low."

The Aberford was wrong when he called love a cutaneous disorder.

There are cutaneous disorders that take that name, but they are no more love than verse is poetry;

Than patriotism is love of country;

Than theology is religion;

Than science is philosophy;

Than paintings are pictures;

Than reciting on the boards is acting;
Than physic is medicine;
Than bread is bread, or gold, gold—in shops.

Love is a state of being; the beloved object is our centre; and our thoughts, affections, schemes, and selves, move but round it.

We may diverge hither or thither, but the golden thread still holds us.

Is fair or dark beauty the fairest? The world cannot decide; but love shall decide in a moment.

A halo surrounds her we love, and makes beautiful to us her movements, her looks, her virtues, her faults, her nonsense, her affectation, and herself, and that's love, Doctor!

Lord Ipsden was capable of loving like this, but to do Lady Barbara justice, she had done much to freeze the germ of noble passion; she had not killed, but she had benumbed it.

"Saunders," said Lord Ipsden, one morning after breakfast, "have you entered everything in your diary?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"All these good people's misfortunes?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Do you think you have spelt their names right?"

"Where it was impossible, my Lord, I substituted an English appellation hidentical in meaning."

"Have you entered and described my first interview with Christie Johnstone, and somebody something?"

"Most minutely, my Lord."

"How I turned Mr. Burke into poetry—how she listened with her eyes all glistening—how they made me talk—how she dropped a tear, he! he! he! at the death of the first baron—how shocked she was at the king striking him when he was dying, to make a knight-banneret of the poor old fellow?"

"Your Lordship will find all the particulars exactly related," said Saunders, with dry pomp.

"How she found out that titles are but breath—how I answered—some nonsense?"

"Your Lordship will find all the topics included."

"How she took me for a madman?

"And you for a prig?"

"The latter circumstance eluded my memory, my Lord."

"But when I told her I must relieve only one poor person by day, she took my hand."

"Your Lordship will find all the items realised in his book, my Lord."

"What a beautiful book!"

"Alba are considerably ameliorated, my Lord."

"Alba?"

"Plural of album, my Lord," explained the refined factotum, "more delicate, I conceive, than the vulgar reading."

Viscount Ipsden read from

MR. SAUNDERS'S ALBUM.

"To illustrate the inelegance of the inferior classes, two juvenile vendors of the piscatory tribe were this day ushered in, and instantaneously, without the accustomed preliminaries, plunged into a familiar conversation with Lord Viscount Ipsden.

"Their vulgarity, shocking and repulsive to myself, appeared to afford his Lordship a satisfaction greater than he derives from the graceful amenities of fashionable association—"

"Saunders, I suspect you of something."

"Me, my Lord?"

"Yes. Writing in an Annual."

"I do, my Lord," said he with benignant hauteur.—"It appears every month—'The Polytechnic.'"

"I thought so! you are polysyllabic, Saunders; *en route!*"

"In this hallucination I find it difficult to participate; associated from infancy with the aristocracy, I shrink, like the sensitive plant, from contact with anything vulgar."

"I see! I begin to understand you, Saunders. Order the dog-cart, and Wordsworth's mare for leader; we'll give her a trial. You are an ass, Saunders."

"Yes, my Lord; I will order Robert to tell James to come for your Lordship's commands about your Lordship's vehicles. (What could he intend by a recent observation of a discourteous character?")

His Lordship soliloquised.

"I never observed it before, but Saunders is an ass! La Johnstone is one of Nature's duchesses, and she has made me know some poor people that will be richer than the rich one day; and she has taught me that honey is to be got from bank-notes—by merely giving them away."

Amongst the objects of charity Lord Ipsden discovered, was one Thomas Harvey, a maker and player of the violin. This man was a person of great intellect; he mastered every subject he attacked. By a careful examination of all the points that

various fine-toned instruments had in common, he had arrived at a theory of sound; he made violins to correspond, and was remarkably successful in insuring that which had been too hastily ascribed to accident—a fine tone.

This man, who was in needy circumstances, demonstrated to his Lordship that ten pounds would make his fortune; because with ten pounds he could set up a shop, instead of working out of the world's sight in a room.

Lord Ipsden gave him ten pounds!

A week after, he met Harvey, more ragged and dirty than before.

Harvey had been robbed by a friend whom he had assisted. Poor Harvey! Lord Ipsden gave him ten pounds more!

Next week, Saunders entering Harvey's house, found him in bed at noon, because he had no clothes to wear.

Saunders suggested that it would be better to give his wife the next money, with strict orders to apply it usefully.

This was done!

The next day, Harvey finding his clothes upon a chair, his tools redeemed from pawn, and a beef-steak ready for his dinner, accused his wife of having money, and meanly refusing him the benefit of it. She acknowledged she had a little, and appealed to the improved state of things as a proof that she knew better than he the use of money. He demanded the said money. She refused—he leathered her—she put him in prison.

This was the best place for him. The man was a drunkard, and all the riches of Egypt would never have made him better off.

And here, gentlemen of the lower classes, a word with you. How can you, with your small incomes, hope to be well off, if you are more extravagant than those who have large ones?

"Us extravagant?" you reply.

Yes! your income is ten shillings a-week; out of that you spend three shillings in drink; ay! you the sober ones. You can't afford it, my boys. Find me a man whose income is a thousand a-year; well, if he imitates you, and spends three hundred upon sensuality, I bet you the odd seven hundred, he does not make both ends meet; the proportion is too great. And *two-thirds of the distress of the lower orders is owing to this—that they are more madly prodigal than the rich; in the worst, lowest, and most dangerous item of all human prodigality!*

Lord Ipsden went to see Mrs. Harvey; it cost him much to go; she lived in the Old Town, and he hated disagreeable smells; he also knew from Saunders that she had two black

eyes, and he hated women with black eyes of that sort. But this good creature did go; did relieve Mrs. Harvey; and bare-headed, suffered himself to be bedewed ten minutes by her tearful twaddle.

For once, Virtue was rewarded: returning over the North Bridge, he met somebody whom, but for his charity, he would not have met.

He came in one bright moment plump upon—Lady Barbara Sinclair. She flushed, he trembled, and in two minutes he had forgotten every human event that had passed since last he was by her side.

She seemed pleased to see him, too; she ignored entirely his obnoxious proposal; he wisely took her cue, and so, on this secret understanding, they were friends. He made his arrangements, and dined with her family. It was a family party. In the evening Lady Barbara allowed it to transpire that she had made inquiries about him.

(He was highly flattered): and she had discovered he was lying hid somewhere in the neighbourhood.

"Studying the guitar?" inquired she.

"No," said he, "studying a new class of the community. Do you know any of what they call the 'lower classes'?"

"Yes."

"Monstrous agreeable people, are they not?"

"No, very stupid! I only know two old women—except the servants, who have no characters. They imitate us, I suspect, which does not say much for their taste."

"But some of my friends are young women; that makes all the difference."

"It does; and you ought to be ashamed. If you want a low order of mind, why desert our own circle?"

"My friends are only low in station; they have rather lofty minds, some of them."

"Well, amuse yourself with these lofty minds. Amusement is the end of being, you know, and the aim of all the men of this day."

"We imitate the ladies," said he slily.

"You do," answered she, very drily; and so the dialogue went on, and Lord Ipsden found the pleasure of being with his cousin compensate him fully for the difference of their opinions; in fact, he found it simply amusing that so keen a wit as his cousin's could be entrapped into the humour of decrying the time one happens to live in, and admiring any epoch one knows next to nothing about, and entrapped by

the notion of its originality, above all things; the idea being the stale common-place of asses in every age, and the manner of conveying the idea being a mere imitation of the German writers, not the good ones, *bien entendu*, but the quill-drivers, the snobs of the Teutonic pen.

But he was to learn that follies are not always laughable, that *eadem sentire* is a bond, and that when a clever and pretty woman chooses to be a fool, her lover, if he is wise, will be a greater—if he can.

The next time they met, Lord Ipsden found Lady Barbara occupied with a gentleman, whose first sentence proclaimed him a pupil of Mr. Thomas Carlyle, and he had the mortification to find that she had neither an ear nor an eye for him.

Human opinion has so many shades, that it is rare to find two people agree.

But two people may agree wonderfully, if they will but let a third think for them both.

Thus it was that these two ran so smoothly in couples.

Antiquity, they agreed, was the time when the world was old, its hair grey, its head wise. Every one that said "Lord, Lord!" two hundred years ago, was a Christian. There were no earnest men now; Williams, the missionary, who lived and died for the Gospel, was not earnest in religion; but Cromwell, who packed a jury, and so murdered his prisoner,—Cromwell, in whose mouth was heaven, and in his heart temporal sovereignty, was the pattern of earnest religion, or, at all events, second in sincerity to Mahomet alone, in the absence of details respecting Satan, of whom we know only that his mouth is a scripture concordance, and his hands the hands of Mr. Carlyle's saints.

Then they went back a century or two, and were eloquent about the great antique heart, and the beauty of an age whose samples were Abbot Sampson and Joan of Arc.

Lord Ipsden hated arugment; but jealousy is a brass spur, it made even this man fluent for once.

He suggested "That five hundred years added to a world's life made it just five hundred years older, not younger,—and if older, greyer,—and if greyer, wiser.

"Of Abbot Sampson," said he, "whom I confess both a great and a good man, his author, who with all his talent belongs to the class muddle-head, tells us, that when he had been two years in authority his red hair had turned grey, fighting against the spirit of his age; how the deuce, then, could he be a sample of the spirit of his age?

"Joan of Arc was burnt by acclamation of her age, and is admired by our age. Which fact identifies an age most with a heroine, to give her your heart, or to give her a blazing faggot and death?

"Abbot Sampson and Joan of Arc," concluded he, "prove no more in favour of their age, and no less against it, than Lot does for or against Sodom. Lot was in Sodom, but not of it; and so were Sampson and Joan in, but not of, the villainous times they lived in.

"The very best text-book of true religion is the New Testament, and I gather from it, that the man who forgives his enemies whilst their axe descends on his head, however poor a creature he may be in other respects, is a better Christian than the man who has the God of Mercy for ever on his lips, and whose hands are swift to shed blood.

"The earnest men of former ages are not extinct in this," added he. "Whenever a scaffold is erected outside a prison-door, if you are earnest in pursuit of truth, and can put up with disgusting objects, you shall see a relic of ancient manners hung.

"There still exist, in parts of America, rivers on whose banks are earnest men, who shall take your scalp, the wife's of your bosom, and the innocent child's of her bosom.

"In England we are as earnest as ever in pursuit of heaven, and of innocent worldly advantages. If, when the consideration of life and death interposes, we appear less earnest in pursuit of comparative trifles, such as kingdoms or dogmas, it is because, cooler in action we are more earnest in thought—because reason, experience, and conscience are things that check the unscrupulousness or beastly earnestness of man.

"Moreover, he who has the sense to see that questions have three sides, is no longer so intellectually as well as morally degraded as to be able to cut every throat that utters an opinion contrary to his own.

"If the phrase 'earnest man' means man imitating the beasts that are deaf to reason, it is to be hoped that civilisation and Christianity will really extinguish the whole race for the benefit of the earth."

Lord Ipsden succeeded in annoying the fair theorist, but not in convincing her.

The mediæval enthusiasts looked on him as some rough animal that had burst into sacred grounds unconsciously, and gradually edged away from him.

CHAPTER X

Lord Ipsden had soon the mortification of discovering that this Mr. * * * was a constant visitor at the house; and although his cousin gave him her ear in this man's absence, on the arrival of her fellow-enthusiast he had ever the mortification of finding himself *de trop*.

Once or twice he demolished this personage in argument, and was rewarded by finding himself more *de trop*.

But one day Lady Barbara, being in a cousinly humour, expressed a wish to sail in his Lordship's yacht, and this hint soon led to a party being organised, and a sort of pic-nic on the island of Inch Coombe; his Lordship's cutter being the mode of conveyence to and from that spot.

Nowit happened that on that very day Jean Carnie's marriage was celebrated on that very island by her relations and friends.

So that we shall introduce our readers to

THE RIVAL PIC-NICS.

We begin with *Les gens comme il faut*.

Pic-Nic No. 1.

The servants were employed in putting away dishes into hampers.

There was a calm silence.

"Hem," observed Sir Henry Talbot.

"Eh?" replied the Honourable Tom Hitherington.

"Mamma," said Miss Vere, "have you brought any work?"

"No, my dear."

"At a pic-nic," said Mr. Hitherington, "isn't it the thing for somebody—aw—to do something?"

"Ipsden," said Lady Barbara, "there is an understanding *between* you and Mr. Hitherington. I condemn you to turn him into English."

"Yes, Lady Barbara; I'll tell you, he means—do you mean anything, Tom?"

Hitherington. "Can't anybody guess what I mean?"

Lady Barbara. "Guess first yourself, you can't be suspected of being in the secret."

Hither. "What I mean is, that people sing a song, or run

races, or preach a sermon, or do something funny at a pic-nic, —aw—somebody gets up and does something."

Lady Bar. "Then perhaps Miss Vere, whose singing is famous, will have the complaisance to sing to us."

Miss Vere. "I should be happy, Lady Barbara, but I have not brought my music."

Lady Bar. "Oh, we are not critical; the simplest air, or even a fragment of melody; the sea and the sky will be a better accompaniment than Broadwood ever made."

Miss V. "I can't sing a note without book."

Sir H. Talbot. "Your music is in your soul—not at your fingers' ends."

Lord Ipsden, to Lady Bar. "It is in her book, and not in her soul."

Lady Bar, to Lord Ips. "Then it has chosen the better situation of the two."

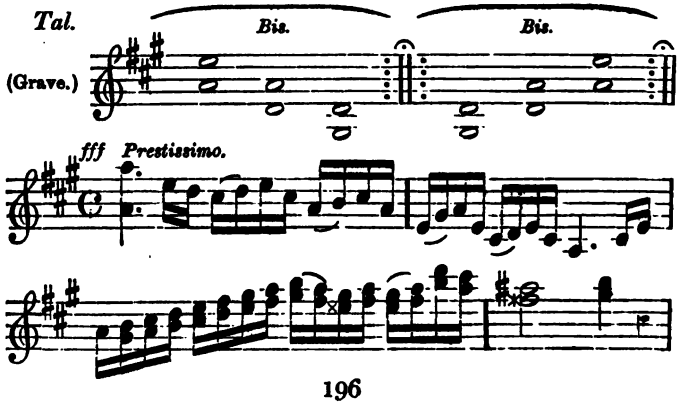
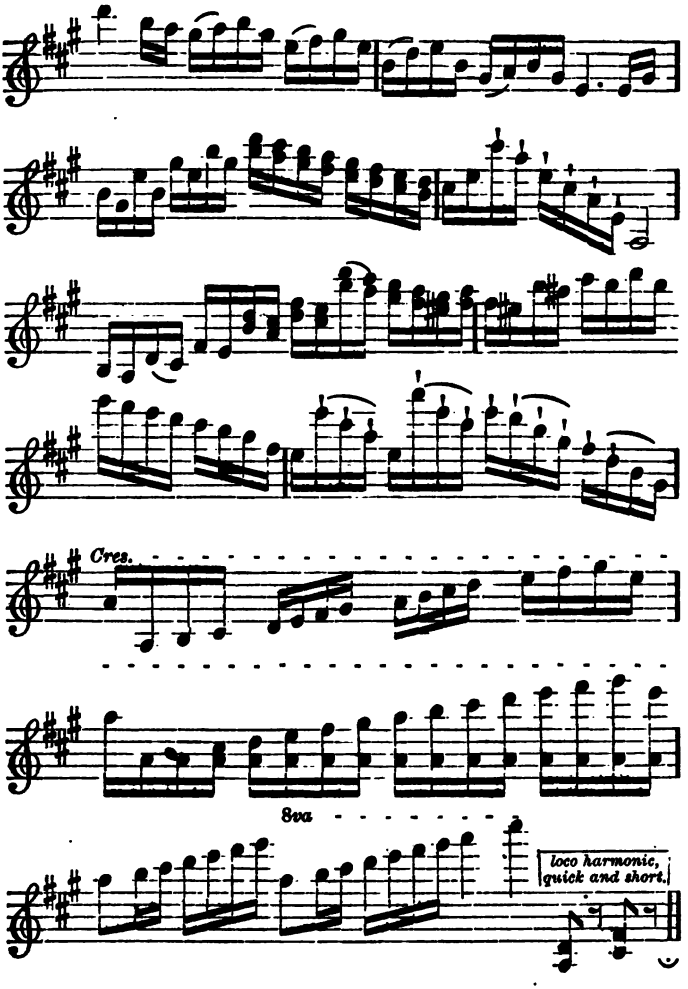
Ips. "Miss Vere is to the fine art of music, what the engrossers are to the black art of law; it all filters through them without leaving any sediment; and so the music of the day passes through Miss Vere's mind, but none remains—to stain its virgin snow." He bows, she smiles.

Lady Bar., to herself. "Insolent: and the little dunce thinks he is complimenting her."

Ips. "Perhaps Talbot will come to our rescue—he is a fiddler."

Tal. "An amateur of the violin."

Ips. "It is all the same thing."

Lady Bar. "I wish it may prove so."

Miss V. "Beautiful."
Mrs. Vere. "Charming."
Hither. "Superb!"
Ips. "You are aware that good music is a thing to be wedded to immortal verse, shall I recite a bit of poetry to match Talbot's strain?"

Miss V. "Oh, yes! how nice."

Ips. (*rhetorically*). "A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z. Y. X. W. V. U. T. S. O. N. M. L. K. J. I. H. G. F. A. M. little p. little t."

"*Lady Bar.* "Beautiful! Superb! Ipsden has been taking lessons on the thinking instrument."

Hither. "He has been *perdu* amongst vulgar people."

Tal. "And expects a pupil of Herz to play him tunes!"

Lady Bar. "What are tunes, Sir Henry?"

Tal. "Something I don't play, Lady Barbara."

Lady Bar. "I understand you; something we ought to like."

Ips. "I have a Stradivarius violin at home: it is yours, Talbot, if you can define a tune."

Tal. "A tune is—everybody knows what."

Lady Bar. "A tune is a tune, that is what you meant to say."

Tal. "Of course it is."

Lady Bar. "Be reasonable, Ipsden; no man can do two things at once; how can the pupil of Herz condemn a thing and know what it means contemporaneously?"

Ips. "Is the drinking-song in 'Der Freischutz' a tune?"

Lady Bar. "It is."

Ips. "And the melodies of Handel, are they tunes?"

Lady Bar. (*pathetically*). "They are! They are!"

Ips. "And the 'Russian Anthem,' and the 'Marseillaise,' and 'Ah, Perdona'?"

Tal. "And Yankee Doodle?"

Lady Bar. "So that Sir Henry, who prided himself on his ignorance, has a wide field for its dominion."

Tal. "All good violin players do like me; they prelude, not play tunes."

Ips. "Then Heaven be thanked for our blind fiddlers. You like syllables of sound in unmeaning rotation, and you despise its words, its purposes, its narrative feats; carry out your principle, it will show you where you are. Buy a dirty pallet for a picture, and dream the alphabet is a poem."

Lady Bar., to herself. "Is this my cousin Richard?"

Hither. "Mind, Ipsden, you are a man of property, and there are such things as commissions *de lunatico*."

Lady Bar. "His defence will be that his friends pronounce him insane."

Ips. "No; I shall subpœna Talbot's fiddle, cross-examination will get nothing out of that but, do, re, mi, fa."

Lady Bar. "Yes, it will; fa, mi, re, do."

Tal. "Violin, if you please."

Lady Bar. "Ask Fiddles's pardon directly."

Sound of fiddles is heard in the distance.

Tal. "How lucky for you, there are fiddles and tunes, and the natives you are said to favour, why not join them?"

Ips. (*shaking his head solemnly*). "I dread to encounter another prelude."

Hither. "Come, I know you would like; it is a wedding party—two sea monsters have been united. The sailors and fishermen are all blue cloth and wash-leather gloves."

Miss V. "He! he!"

Tal. "The fishwives unite the colours of the rainbow——"

Lady Bar. "And we all know how hideous they are—to vulgar, blooming cheeks, staring white teeth, and skyblue eyes."

Mrs. V. "How satirical you are, especially you, Lady Barbara."

Here Lord Ipsden, after a word to Lady Barbara, the answer to which did not appear to be favourable, rose, gave a little yawn, looked steadily at his companions without seeing them, and departed without seeming aware that he was leaving anybody behind him.

Hither. "Let us go somewhere where we can quiz the natives without being too near them."

Lady Bar. "I am tired of this unbroken solitude, I must go and think to the sea," added she, in a mock soliloquy; and out she glided with the same unconscious air as his Lordship had worn.

The others moved off slowly together.

"Mamma," said Miss Vere, "I can't understand half Barbara Sinclair says."

"It is not necessary, my love," replied mamma, "she is rather eccentric, and I fear she is spoiling Lord Ipsden."

"Poor Lord Ipsden," murmured the lovely Vere, "he used to be so nice, and do like everybody else. Mamma, I shall bring some work the next time."

"Do, my love."

Pic-Nic No. 2.

In a house, two hundred yards from this scene, a merry dance, succeeding a merry song, had ended, and they were in the midst of an interesting story; Christie Johnstone was the narrator. She had found the tale in one of the Viscount's books,—it had made a great impression on her.

The rest were listening intently: in a room which had

lately been all noise, not a sound was now to be heard but the narrator's voice.

"Aweel, lasses, here are the three wee kists set, the lads are to chuse,—the ane that chuses reicht is to get Porsha, an' the lave to get the bag, and dee baitchelars;—Flucker Johnstone, you that's sae clever,—are ye for gowd, or siller, or leed?"

1st Fishwife. "Gowd for me!"

2nd ditto. "The white siller's my taste."

Flucker. "Na! there's aye some deevelish trick in thir lassies' stories. I shall lie-to, till the ither lads hae chused; the mair part will put themsels oot, ane will hit it off reicht may-be, then I shall gie him a hidin' an' carry off the lass. You-hoo!"

Jean Carnie. "That's you, Flucker."

Christie Johnstone. "And div ye really think we are gawn to let you see a' the world chuse? Na, lad, ye are putten oot o' the room, like witnesses."

Flucker. "Then I'd toss a penny; for gien ye trust to luck, she whiles favours ye, but gien ye commence to reason and argefy—ye're done!"

Christie. "The suitors had na your wit, my manny, or may-be they had na a penny to toss, sae ane chused the gowd and ane the siller; but they got an awfu' affront. The gold kist had just a skull intill't, and the siller a deed cuddy's head!"

Chorus of Females. "He! he! he!"

Ditto of Males. "Haw! haw! haw! haw! Ho!"

Christie. "An' Porsha puttit the puir of gowks to the door. Then came Bassanio, the lad fra Veeneece, that Porsha loed in secret. Veeneece, lasses, is a wonderful city; the streets o't are water, and the carriages are boats—that's in Chambers'."

Flucker. "Wha are ye making a fool o'?"

Christie. "What's wrang?"

Flucker. "Yon's just as big a lee as ever I heerd."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth ere he had reason to regret them; a severe box on the ear was administered by his indignant sister. Nobody pitied them.

Christie. "I'll laern ye t' affront me before a' the company."

Jean Carnie. "Suppose it's a lee, there's nae silver to pay for it, Flucker."

Christie. "Jean, I never telt a lee in a' my days."

Jean. "There's ane to begin wi' then. Go ahead, Custy."

Christie. "She bade the music play for him, for music brightens thoucht; ony way, he chose the leed kist. Open'st and wasn't there Porsha's pictur, and a posey, that said—

"If you be well pleased with this,
And hold your fortune for your bliss;
Turn you where your leddy iss,
And greet her wi' a loving——'" (*Pause.*)

"Kess," roared the company.

Chorus, led by Flucker. "Hurraih!"

Christie (*pathetically*). "Flucker, behave!"

Sandy Liston (*drunk*). "Hur-raih!" He then solemnly reflected—"Na! but it's na hurraih, decency requires amen first an' hurraih afterwards; here's kissin' plenty, but I hear nae word o' the minister. Ye'll obsairve, young woman, that kissin's the prologue to sin, and I'm a decent mon, an' a grey-headed mon, an' your licht stories are no for me; sae if the minister's no expeckit I shall retire—an' tak my quiet jill my lane."

Jean Carnie. "And div ye really think a decent cummer like Custy wad let the lad and lass misbehave thirsels? Na! lad, the minister's at the door, but" (sinking her voice to a confidential whisper) "I daurna let him in, for fear he'd see ye hae putten the enemy in your mooth sae aerly. (That's Custy's word.)"

"Jemmy Drysel," replied Sandy, addressing vacancy, for Jemmy was mysteriously at work in the kitchen, "ye hae gotten a thoughtfu' wife." (Then, with a strong revulsion of feeling.) "Dinna let the blākgŭrd[1] in here," cried he, "to spoil the young folk's sporrt."

Christie. "Aweel, lasses, comes a letter to Bassanio; he reads it, and turns as pale as deeth."

A Fishwife. "Gude help us."

Christie. "Poorsha behoved to ken his grief, wha had a better reicht? 'Here's a letter, leddy,' says he, 'the paper's the boedy of my freend, like, and every word in it a gaping wound.'"

A Fisherman. "Mairey on us."

Christie. "Lad, it was fra puir Antonio, ye mind o' him, lasses. Hech! the ill luck o' yon man, no a ship come hame; ane foundered at sea, coming fra Tri-po-lis; the pirates scuttled another, an' ane ran ashore on the Goodwyns, near Brighthelm-stane, that's in England itsel', I daur say: sae he could na pay the three thoosand ducats, an' Shylock had grippit him, an' sought the pund o' flesh aff the breest o' him, puir body."

Sandy Liston. "He would na be the waur o' a wee bit

[1] At present this is a spondee in England—a trochee in Scotland. The pronunciation of this important word ought to be fixed, representing, as it does, so large a portion of the community in both countries.

hiding, yon thundering ŭrang ŭtang; let the man alane, ye cursed old cannibal."

Christie. "Poorsha keepit her man but ae hoor till they were united, an' then sent him wi' a puckle o' her ain siller to Veeneece, and Antonio—think o' that, lasses—pairted on their wedding day."

Lizzy Johnstone, a Fishwife, aged 12. "Hech, hech! it's lamĕntable."

Jean Carnie. "I'm saying, mairriage is quick wark, in some pairts,—here there's an awfu' trouble to get a man."

A young Fishwife. "Ay, is there."

Omnes. "Haw! haw! haw!" (The fishwife hides.)

Christie. "Fill your taupsels, lads and lasses, and awa to Veeneece."

Sandy Liston (sturdily). "I'll no gang to sea this day."

Christie. "Noo, we are in the hall o' judgment. Here are set the judges, awfu' to behold; there, on his throne, presides the Juke."

Flucker. "She's awa to her Ennglish."

Lizzy Johnstone. "Did we come to Veeneece to speak Scoetch, ye useless fule?"

Christie. "Here, pale and hopeless, but resigned, stands the broken mairchant, Antonio; there wi' scales and knives, and revenge in his murderin' eye, stands the crewel Jew Shylock."

"Aweel," muttered Sandie considerately, "I'll no mak a disturbance on a wedding day."

Christie. "They wait for Bell—I dinna mind his name—a laerned lawyer, ony way; he's sick, but sends ane mair laerned still, and when this ane comes, he looks not older nor wiser than mysel'."

Flucker. "No possible!"

Christie. "Ye needna be sae sarcy, Flucker, for when he comes to his wark he soon lets 'em ken—runs his een like lightening ower the boend. 'This bond's forfeit. Is Antonio not able to dischairge the money?' 'Ay!' cries Bassanio, 'here's the sum thrice told.'—Says the young judge, in a bit whisper to Shylock, 'Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee. Be mairceful,' says he out loud. 'Wha'll mak me?' says the Jew body. 'Mak ye!' says he; 'maircy is no a thing ye strain through a sieve, mon; it droppeth like the gentle dew fra heaven upon the place beneath; it blesses him that gives and him that taks; it becomes the king better than his throne, and airthly power is maist like God's power when maircy seasons justice.'"

Robert Haw, Fisherman. "Dinna speak like that to me onybody, or I shall gie ye my boat, and fling my nets intil it, as ye sail awa' wi her."

Jean Carnie. "Sae he let the puir deevil go. Oh! ye ken wha could stand up against siccan a shower o' Ennglish as thaat."

Christie. "He just said, 'My deeds upon my heed. I claim the law,' says he; 'there is no power in the tongue o' man to alter me. I stay here on my boend.'"

Sandy Liston. "I hae sat quiet!—quiet I hae sat against my will, no to disturb Jamie Drysel's weddin'; but ye carry the game ower far, Shylock, my lad. I'll just give yon bluidy-minded ŭrāng ŭtāng a hidin', and bring Tony off, the gude, puir-spirited creature: and him, an' me, an' Bassanee, an' Porshee, we'll all hae a jill thegither."

He rose, and was instantly seized by two of the company, from whom he burst furiously, after a struggle, and the next moment was heard to fall clean from the top to the bottom of the stairs. Flucker and Jean ran out; the rest appealed against the interruption.

Christie. "Hech! he's killed; Sandy Liston's brake his neck."

"What aboot it, lassy?" said a young fisherman, "it's *Antonio* I'm feared for; save him, lassy, if possible; but I doot ye'll no get him clear o' yon deevelich heathen."

"Auld Sandy's cheap sairved," added he, with all the indifference a human tone could convey.

"O Cursty," said Lizzy Johnstone, with a peevish accent, "dinna break the bonny yarn for naething."

Flucker (*returning*). "He's a' reicht."

Christie. "Is he no dead?"

Flucker. "Him deed? he's sober—that's a' the change I see."

Christie. "Can he speak? I'm asking ye."

Flucker. "Yes, he can speak."

Christie. "What does he say, puir body?"

Flucker. "He sat up, an' sought a jill fra' the wife—puir body!"

Christie. "Hech, hech! he was my pupil in the airt o' sobriety!—aweel, the young judge rises to deliver the sentence of the coort.—Silence!" thundered Christie.—A lad and a lass that were slightly flirting were discountenanced.

Christie. "A pund o' that same mairchant's flesh is thine! the coort awards it, and the law does give it."

A young Fishwife. "There, I thoucht sae; he's gaun to cut him, he's gaun to cut him; I'll no can bide." (*Exibat.*)

Christie. "There's a fulish goloshen.—'Have by a doctor to stop the blood.'—'I see nae doctor in the boend,' says the Jew body."

Flucker. "Bait your hook wi' a boend, and ye shall catch yon carle's saul, Satan, my lad."

Christie (with dismal pathos). "O Flucker! dinna speak evil o' deegneties,—that's may-be fishing for yoursel' the noo!—'An' ye shall cut the flesh frae off his breest.'—'A sentence,' says Shylock, 'come, prepare.'"

Christie made a dash *en Shylock,* and the company trembled.

Christie. "'Bide a wee,' says the judge. 'This boend gies ye na a drap o' bluid; the words expressly are, a pund o' flesh!'"

A Dramatic Pause.

Jean Carnie (drawing her breath). "That's into your mutton, Shylock."

Christie (with dismal pathos). "O Jean! yon's an awful voolgar expression to come fra' a woman's mooth."

"Could ye no hae said, 'intil his bacon'?" said Lizzy Johnstone, confirming the remonstrance.

Christie. "Then tak your boend, an' your pund o' flesh, but in cutting o't, if thou dost shed one drop of Christian bluid—thou diest!"

Jean Carnie. "Hech!"

Christie. "Thy goods are by the laws of Veeneece con-fis-cate, confiscate."

Then like an artful narrator, she began to wind up the story more rapidly.

"Sae Shylock got to be no sae saucy—'Pay the boend thrice,' says he, 'and let the puir deevil go.'—'Here it's,' says Bassanio.—Na! the young judge wadna let him.—'He has refused it in open coort; no a bawbee for Shylock but just the forfeiture; an' he daur na tak it.'—'I'm awa',' says he.—'The deivil tak ye a'. Na! he wasna to win clear sae; ance they'd gotten the Jew on the hep, they worried him, like good Christians, that's a fact. The judge fand a law that fitted him, for conspiring against the life of a citizen; an' he behooved to give up hoose an' lands, an' be a Christian; yon was a soor drap—he tarned no weel, puir auld villain, an' scairtit; an' the lawyers sent ane o' their weary parchments till his hoose, and the puir auld heathen signed awa his siller, an' Abraham, an' Isaac, an' Jacob, on the heed o't. I pity him, an auld, auld man; and his dochter had rin off wi' a Christian lad—they ca' her Jessica, and didn't she steal his

very diamond ring that his ain lass gied him when he was young, an' maybe no sae hard-hairted."

Jean Carnie. "Oh the jaud! suppose he was a Jew, it was na her business to clean him oot."

A young Fishwife. "Aweel, it was only a Jew body, that's my comfort."

Christie. "Ye speak as a Jew was na a man; has not a Jew eyes, if ye please?"

Lizzy Johnstone. "Ay, has he!—and the awfuest lang neb atween em."

Christie. "Has not a Jew affections, paassions, organs?"

Jean. "Na! Christie; thir lads comes fr' Italy!"

Christie. "If you prick him, does he not bleed; if you tickle him, does na he lauch?"

A young Fishwife (pertly). "I never kittlet a Jew, for my pairt—sae I'll no can tell ye."

Christie. "If you poison him, does he not die? and if you wrang him" (*with fury*), "shall he not revenge?"

Lizzie Johnstone. "Oh! but ye're a fearsome lass."

Christie. "Wha'll give me a sang for my bonny yarn?"

Lord Ipsden, who had been an unobserved auditor of the latter part of the tale, here inquired whether she had brought her book.

"What'n buik?"

"Your music-book!"

"Here's my music-book," said Jean, roughly tapping her head.

"And here's mines," said Christie, bird-ly, touching her bosom.

"Richard," said she thoughtfully, "I wish ye may no hae been getting in voolgar company; div ye think we hae minds like rinning water?"

Flucker (avec malice). "And tongues like the milk-clack abune it? Because if ye think sae, captain—ye're no far wrang!"

Christie. "Na! we hae na muckle gowd may-be, but our minds are gowden vessels."

Jean. "Aha! lad."

Christie. "They are not saxpenny sieves, to let music an' metre through, and leave us none the wiser or better. Dinna gang in low voolgar company, or you're a lost laddy."

Ipsden. "Vulgar, again! everybody has a different sense for that word, I think. What is vulgar?"

Christie. "Voolgar folk sit on an chair, ane, twa, whiles three hours, eatin an' abune a' drinkin, as still as hoegs, or

gruntin' puir every day clashes, goëssip, rubbich; when ye are aside them, ye might as weel be aside a cuddy; they canna gie ye a sang, they canna tell ye a story, they canna think ye a thoucht, to save their useless lives; that's voolgar folk."

She sings. "A caaller herrin'!"

Jean. "A caaller herrin!"

Omnes.

"Come buy my bonny caaller herrin';
Six a penny caaller from the sea," &c.

The music chimed in, and the moment the song was done, without pause, or anything to separate or chill the succession of the arts, the fiddles diverged with a gallant plunge into "The Dusty Miller." The dancers found their feet by an instinct as rapid, and a rattling reel shook the floor like thunder. Jean Carnie assumed the privilege of a bride, and seized his Lordship; Christie, who had a mind to dance with him too, took Flucker captive, and these four were one reel! There were seven others.

The principle of reel dancing is articulation; the foot strikes the ground for every *accented* note (and by-the-by, it is their weakness of accent which makes all English reel and hornpipe players such failures).

And in the best steps of all, which it has in common with the hornpipe, such as the quick "heel and toe," "the sailor's fling," and the "double shuffle," the foot strikes the ground for every *single* note of the instrument.

All good dancing is beautiful.

But this articulate dancing, compared with the loose, lawless diffluence of motion that goes by that name, gives me (I must confess it) as much more pleasure as articulate singing is superior to tunes played on the voice by a young lady.

Or the clean playing of my mother to the pianoforte splashing of my daughter; though the latter does attack the instrument as a washerwoman her soapsuds, and the former works like a lady.

Or skating to sliding:

Or English verse to dactyls in English:

Or painting to daubing:

Or preserved strawberries to strawberry jam.

What says Goldsmith of the two styles?

"They swam, sprawled, frisked, and languished; but Olivia's foot was as pat to the music as its echo."—*Vicar of Wakefield.*

Newhaven dancing aims also at fun; laughter mingles with agility; grotesque, yet graceful gestures are flung in, and little inspiriting cries flung out.

His Lordship soon entered into the spirit of it. Deep in the mystery of the hornpipe, he danced one or two steps Jean and Christie had never seen, but their eyes were instantly on his feet, and they caught in a minute, and executed these same steps.

To see Christie Johnstone do the double-shuffle with her arms so saucily a-kimbo, and her quick elastic foot at an angle of forty-five, was a treat.

The dance became inspiriting, inspiring, intoxicating; and when the fiddles at last left off, the feet went on another seven bars by the enthusiastic impulse.

And so, alternately spinning yarns, singing songs, dancing, and making fun, and mingling something of heart and brain in all, these benighted creatures made themselves happy instead of peevish, and with a day of stout, vigorous, healthy pleasure, refreshed, indemnified, and warmed themselves for many a day of toil.

Such were the two pic-nics of Inch Coombe, and these rival cliques, agreeing in nothing else, would have agreed in this: each, if allowed (but we won't allow either) to judge the other, would have pronounced the same verdict—

"Ils ne savent pas vivre ces gens-là."

CHAPTER XI

Two of our personages left Inch Coombe less happy than when they came to it.

Lord Ipsden encountered Lady Barbara with Mr. ——, who had joined her upon the island.

He found them discoursing, as usual, about the shams of the present day, and the sincerity of Cromwell and Mahomet, and he found himself *de trop*.

They made him, for the first time, regret the loss of those earnest times when, "to avoid the inconvenience of both addressing the same lady," you could cut a rival's throat at once, and be smiled on by the fair and society.

That a book-maker should blaspheme high civilisation, by which alone he exists, and one of whose diseases and flying pains he is, neither surprised nor moved him; but that any human being's actions should be affected by such tempestuous twaddle, was ridiculous.

And that the witty Lady Barbara should be caught by this chaff was intolerable; he began to feel bitter.

He had the blessings of the poor, the good opinion of the world; every living creature was prepossessed in his favour but one, and that one despised him; it was a diabolical prejudice; it was the spiteful caprice of his fate.

His heart, for a moment, was in danger of deteriorating. He was miserable; the devil suggested to him, "make others miserable too;" and he listened to the advice.

There was a fine breeze, but instead of sailing on a wind, as he might have done, he made a series of tacks, and all were ill.

The earnest man first; and Flucker announced the skipper's insanity to the whole town of Newhaven, for, of course, these tacks were all marine solecisms.

The other discontented Picnician was Christie Johnstone. Gatty never came; and this, coupled with five or six days' previous neglect, could no longer pass unnoticed.

Her gaiety failed her before the afternoon was ended; and the last two hours were spent by her alone, watching the water on all sides for him.

At last, long after the departure of his Lordship's yacht, the Newhaven boat sailed from Inch Coombe with the wedding-party. There was now a strong breeze, and the water every now and then came on board; so the men set the foresail with two reefs, and drew the mainsail over the women; and there, as they huddled together on the dark, Jean Carnie discovered that our gay story-teller's eyes were yet with tears.

Jean said nothing; she embraced her, and made them flow faster.

But when they came alongside the pier, Jean, who was the first to get her head from under the sail, whipped it back again, and said to Christie—

"Here he is, Christie; dinna speak till him."

And sure enough there was, in the twilight, with a pale face and an uneasy look—Mr. Charles Gatty!

He peered timidly into the boat, and when he saw Christie, an "Ah!" that seemed to mean twenty different things at once, burst from his bosom. He held out his arm to assist her.

She cast on him one glance of mute reproach, and placing her foot on the boat's gunwale, sprang like an antelope upon the pier, without accepting his assistance.

Before going farther, we must go back for this boy, and conduct him from where we left him up to the present point.

The moment he found himself alone with Jean Carnie, in his own house, he began to tell her what trouble he was in; how his mother had convinced him of his imprudence in falling

in love with Christie Johnstone; and how she insisted on a connection being broken off, which had given him his first glimpse of heaven upon earth, and was contrary to common sense.

Jean heard him out, and then, with the air of a lunatic asylum keeper to a rhodomontading patient, told him "he was one fool, and his mother was another." First she took him up on the score of prudence.

"You," said she, "are a beggarly painter, without a rap; Christie has houses, boats, nets, and money: you are in debt; she lays by money every week. It is not prudent on her part to take up with you—the better your bargain, my lad."

Under the head of common sense, which she maintained was all on the same side of the question, she calmly inquired—

"How could an old woman of sixty be competent to judge how far human happiness depends on love, when she has no experience of that passion, and the reminiscences of her youth have become dim and dark? You might as well set a judge in court, that has forgotten the law,—common sense," said she; "the old wife is sixty, and you are twenty—what can she do for you the forty years you may reckon to outlive her? Who is to keep you through those weary years, but the wife of your own choice, not you mother's? You English does na read the Bible, or ye'd ken that a lad is to 'leave his father and mother, and cleave until his wife,'" added she; then, with great contempt, she repeated, "common sense, indeed! ye're fou wi' your common sense; ye hae the name o't pat eneuch —but there's na muckle o' that mairchandise in your harns."

Gatty was astonished: what! was there really common sense on the side of bliss? and when Jean told him to join her party at Inch Coombe, or never look her in the face again, scales seemed to fall from his eyes; and with a heart that turned in a moment from lead to a feather, he vowed he would be at Inch Coombe.

He then begged Jean on no account to tell Christie the struggle he had been subjected to, since his scruples were now entirely conquered.

Jean acquiesced at once, and said, "Indeed, she would be very sorry to give the lass that muckle pain."

She hinted, moreover, that her neebor's spirit was so high, she was quiet capable of breaking with him at once upon such an intimation; and she, Jean, was "nae mischief-maker."

In the energy of his gratitude, he kissed this dark-browed beauty, professing to see in her a sister.

And she made no resistance to this way of showing gratitude, but muttered between her teeth, "He's just a bairn!"

And so she went about her business.

On her retreat, his mother returned to him, and, with a sad air, hoped nothing that that rude girl had said had weakened his filial duty.

"No, mother," said he.

She then, without explaining how she came acquainted with Jean's arguments, proceeded to demolish them one by one.

"If your mother is old and experienced," said she, "benefit by her age and experience. She has not forgotten love, nor the ills it leads to, when not fortified by prudence. Scripture says, a man shall cleave to his wife when he has left his parents; but in making that, the most important step of life, where do you read that he is to break the fifth commandment? But I do you wrong, Charles, you never could have listened to that vulgar girl when she told you your mother was not your best friend."

"N—no, mother, of course not."

"Then you will not go to that place to break my heart, and undo all you have done this week."

"I should like to go, mother."

"You will break my heart if you do."

"Christie will feel herself slighted, and she has not deserved this treatment from me."

"The other will explain to her, and if she is as good a girl as you say——"

"She is an angel!"

"How can a fishwife be an angel? Well, then, she will not set a son to disobey his mother."

"I don't think she would! but is all the goodness to be on her side?"

"No, Charles, you do your part; deny yourself, be an obedient child, and your mother's blessing and the blessing of Heaven will rest upon you."

In short, he was not to go to Inch Coombe.

He stayed at home, his mother set him to work; he made a poor hand of it, he was so wretched. She at last took compassion on him, and in the evening, when it was now too late for a sail to Inch Coombe, she herself recommended a walk to him.

The poor boy's feet took him towards Newhaven, not that he meant to go to his love, but he could not forbear from looking at the place which held her.

He was about to return, when a spacious blue jacket hailed him. Somewhere inside this jacket was Master Flucker, who had returned in the yacht, leaving his sister on the island.

Gatty instantly poured out a flood of questions.

The baddish boy reciprocated fluency: he informed him "that his sister had been the star of a goodly company, and that her own lad having stayed away, she had condescended to make a conquest of the skipper himself.

"He had come in quite at the tag end of one of her stories, but it had been sufficient to do his business—he had danced with her, had even whistled whilst she sung (hech, it was bonny !)

"And when the cutter sailed, he, Flucker, had seen her perched on a rock, like a mermaid, watching their progress, which had been slow, because the skipper, infatuated with so sudden a passion, had made a series of ungrammatical tacks."

For his part he was glad, said the gracious Flucker; the lass was a prideful hussy, that had given some twenty lads a sore heart and him many a sore back; and he hoped his skipper, with whom he naturally identified himself rather than with his sister, would avenge the male sex upon her.

In short, he went upon this tack till he drove poor Gatty nearly mad.

Here was a new feeling superadded; at first he felt injured, but on reflection what cause of complaint had he?

He had neglected her; he might have been her partner,—he had left her to find one where she could.

Fool, to suppose that so beautiful a creature would ever be neglected—except by him!

It was more than he could bear.

He determined to see her, to ask her forgiveness, to tell her everything, to beg her to decide, and, for his part, he would abide by her decision.

Christie Johnstone, as we have already related, declined his arm, sprang like a deer upon the pier, and walked towards her home, a quarter of a mile distant.

Gatty followed her disconsolately, hardly knowing what to do.

At last, observing that she drew near enough to the wall to allow room for another on the causeway, he hadjust nous enough to creep alongside, and pull her sleeve somewhat timidly.

"Christie, I want to speak to you."

"What can ye hae to say till me?"

"Christie, I am very unhappy; and I want to tell you why, but I have hardly the strength or the courage."

"Ye shall come ben my hoose if ye are unhappy, and we'll hear your story: come away."

He had never been admitted into her house before.

They found it clean as a snowdrift.

They found a bright fire, and Flucker frying innumerable steaks.

The baddish boy had obtained them, in his sister's name and at her expense, at the flesher's, and claimed credit for his affection.

Potatoes he had boiled in their jackets, and so skilfully, that those jackets hung by a thread.

Christie laid an unbleached table-cloth, that somehow looked sweeter than a white one, as brown bread is sweeter than white.

But lo, Gatty could not eat; so then Christie would not, because he refused her cheer.

The baddish boy chuckled, and addressed himself to the nice brown steaks with their rich gravy.

On such occasions a solo on the knife and fork seemed better than a trio to the gracious Flucker.

Christie moved about the room, doing little household matters, Gatty's eye followed her.

Her beauty lost nothing in this small apartment; she was here, like a brilliant in some quaint, rough setting, which all earth's jewellers should despise, and all its poets admire, and it should show off the stone and not itself.

Her beauty filled the room, and almost made the spectators ill.

Gatty asked himself whether he could really have been such a fool as to think of giving up so peerless a creature.

Suddenly an idea occurred to him, a bright one and not inconsistent with a true artist's character—he would decline to act in so doubtful a case: he would float passively down the tide of events—he would neither desert her, nor disobey his mother; he would take everything as it came, and to begin, as he was there, he would for the present say nothing but what he felt, and what he felt was that he loved her.

He told her so accordingly.

She replied, concealing her satisfaction, "that if he liked her, he would not have refused to eat when she asked him."

But our hero's appetite had returned with his change of purpose, and he instantly volunteered to give the required proof of affection.

Accordingly two pound of steaks fell before him.

Poor boy—he had hardly eaten a genuine meal for a week past.

Christie sat opposite him, and every time he looked off his plate, he saw her rich blue eyes dwelling on him.

Everything contributed to warm his heart, he yielded to the spell, he became contented, happy, gay.

Flucker ginger-cordialed him, his sister bewitched him.

She related the day's events in a merry mood.

Mr. Gatty burst forth into singing.

He sung two light and sombre trifles, such as in the present day are deemed generally encouraging to the spirits, and particularly in accordance with the sentiment of supper—they were about Death and Ivy Green.

The dog's voice was not very powerful, but sweet and round as honey dropping from the comb.

His two hearers were entranced, for the creature sang with an inspiration good singers dare not indulge.

He concluded by informing Christie that the ivy was symbolical of her, and the oak prefigured Charles Gatty, Esq.

He might have inverted the simile with more truth.

In short, he never said a word to Christie about parting with her, but several about being buried in the same grave with her, sixty years hence, for which the spot he selected was Westminster Abbey.

And away he went, leaving golden opinions behind him.

The next day Christie was so affected with his conduct, coming as it did, after an apparent coolness, that she conquered her bashfulness and called on the "Vile Count," and with some blushes and hesitation, inquired "Whether a painter lad was a fit subject of charity."

"Why not?" said his Lordship.

She then told him Gatty's case, and he instantly promised to see that artist's pictures, particularly ane "awfu' bonny ane;" the hero of which she described as an English minister blessing the bairns with one hand, and giving orders to kill the puir Scoetch with the other.

"C'est égal," said Christie in Scotch, "it's awfu' bonny."

Gatty reached home late; his mother had retired to rest.

But the next morning she drew from him what had happened, and then ensued another of those dialogues which I am ashamed again to give the reader.

Suffice it to say, that she once more prevailed, though with far greater difficulty; time was to be given him to unsew a connection which he could not cut asunder, and he, with tearful eyes and a heavy heart, agreed to take some step the very first opportunity.

This concession was hardly out of his mouth ere his mother made him kneel down and bestowed her blessing upon him.

He received it coldly and dully, and expressed a languid hope it might prove a charm to save him from despair; and sad, bitter, and dejected, forced himself to sit down and work on the picture that was to meet his unrelenting creditor's demand.

He was working on his picture, and his mother, with her needle at the table, when a knock was heard, and gay as a lark, and fresh as the dew on the shamrock, Christie Johnstone stood in person in the apartment.

She was evidently the bearer of good tidings; but before she could express them, Mrs. Gatty beckoned her son aside, and announcing, "she should be within hearing," bade him take the occasion that so happily presented itself, and make the first step.

At another time, Christie, who had learned from Jean the arrival of Mrs. Gatty, would have been struck with the old lady's silence; but she came to tell the depressed painter that the charitable Viscount was about to visit him and his picture; and she was so full of the good fortune likely to ensue, that she was neglectful of minor considerations.

It so happened, however, that certain interruptions prevented her from ever delivering herself of the news in question.

First, Gatty himself came to her, and casting uneasy glances at the door, by which his mother had just gone out, said—

"Christie!"

"My lad!"

"I want to paint your likeness."

This was for a *souvenir*, poor fellow!

"Hech! I wad like fine to be painted."

"It must be exactly the same size as yourself, and so like you, that should we be parted I may seem not to be quite alone in the world."

Here he was obliged to turn his head away.

"But we'll no pairt," replied Christie cheerfully. "Suppose ye're puir, I'm rich, and it's a' one; dinna be so cast down for auchty pund."

At this, a slipshod servant entered, and said—

"There's a fisher lad, inquiring for Christie Johnstone."

"It will be Flucker," said Christie; "show him ben. What's wrang the noo, I wonder!"

The baddish boy entered, took up a position, and remained apparently passive, hands in pockets.

Christie. "Aweel, what est?"

Flucker. "Custy."

Christie. "What's your will, my manny?"

Flucker. "Custy, I was at Inch Keith the day."

Christie. "And hae ye really come to Edinbro' to tell me thaat?"

Flucker (*dryly*). "Oh! ye ken the lasses are a hantle wiser than we are—will ye hear me? South Inch Keith, I played a bowl i' the water, just for divairsion,—and I catched twarree fish!"

Christie. "Floonders, I bet."

Flucker. "Does floonders swim high? I'll let you see his gills, and if ye are a reicht fishwife ye'll smell bluid."

Here he opened his jacket, and showed a bright little fish.

In a moment all Christie's nonchalance gave way to a fiery animation. She darted to Flucker's side.

"Ye hae na been sae daft as tell?" asked she.

Flucker shook his head contemptuously.

"Ony birds at the island, Flucker?"

"Sea-maws, plenty, and a bird I dinna ken; he moonted sae high, then doon like thunder intil the sea, and gart the water flee as high as Haman, and porpoises as big as my boat."

"Porr-poises, fulish laddy—ye hae seen the herrin' whale at his wark, and the solant guse ye hae seen her at wark; and beneath the sea, Flucker, every coed-fish and doeg-fish, and fish that has teeth, is after them; and half Scotland wad be at Inch Keith Island if they kenned what ye hae tell't me—dinna speak to me."

During this, Gatty, who did not comprehend this sudden excitement, or thought it childish, had tried in vain to win her attention.

At last he said, a little peevishly, "Will you not attend to me, and tell me at least when you will sit to me?"

"Set!" cried she. "When there's nae wark to be done stanning."

And with this she was gone.—At the foot of the stairs, she said to her brother—

"Puir lad! I'll sune draw auchty punds fra' the sea for him, with my feyther's nets."

As she disappeared, Mrs. Gatty appeared.

"And this is the woman whose mind was not in her dirty business," cried she.

"Does not that open your eyes, Charles?

"Ah! Charles," added she tenderly, "there's no friend like a mother."

And off she carried the prize—his vanity had been mortified.

And so that happened to Christie Johnstone which has

befallen many a woman—the greatness of her love made that love appear small to her lover.

"Ah! mother," cried he, "I must live for you and my art; I am not so dear to her as I thought."

And so, with a sad heart, he turned away from her; whilst she, with a light heart, darted away to think and act for him.

CHAPTER XII

It was some two hours after this that a gentleman, plainly dressed, but whose clothes seemed a part of himself—(whereas mine I have observed hang upon me, and the Rev. Josiah Splitall's stick to him)—glided into the painter's room, with an inquiry whether he had not a picture or two disposable.

"I have one finished picture, sir," said the poor boy; "but the price is high!"

He brought it, in a faint-hearted way; for he had shown it to five picture-dealers, and all five agreed it was hard.

He had painted a lime-tree, distant fifty yards, and so painted it that it looked something like a lime-tree fifty yards off.

"That was mesquin," said his judges; "the poetry of painting required abstract trees, at metaphysical distance, not the various trees of nature, as they appear under positive accidents."

On this Mr. Gatty had deluged them with words.

"When it is art, truth, or sense, to fuse a cow, a horse, and a critic, into one undistinguishable quadruped, with six legs, then it will be art to melt an ash, an elm, and a lime, things that differ more than quadrupeds, into what you call abstract trees, that any man who has seen a tree, as well as looked at one, would call drunken stinging-nettles. You, who never look at nature, how can you judge the arts, which are all but copies of nature? At two hundred yards distance, full-grown trees are more distinguishable than the animal tribe. Paint me an abstract human being, neither man nor a woman," said he, "and then I will agree to paint a tree that shall be no tree; and if no man will buy it, perhaps the father of lies will take it off my hands, and hang it in the only place it would not disgrace."

In short, he never left off till he had crushed the non-buyers with eloquence and satire; but he could not crush them into buyers—they beat him at the passive retort.

Poor Gatty, when the momentary excitement of argument

had subsided, drank the bitter cup all must drink awhile, whose bark is alive, and strong enough to stem the current down which the dead, weak things of the world are dritting, many of them into safe harbours.

And now he brought out his picture with a heavy heart.

"Now," said he to himself, "this gentleman will talk me dead, and leave me no richer in coin, and poorer in time and patience."

The picture was placed in a light, the visitor sat down before it.

A long pause ensued.

"Has he fainted?" thought Gatty ironically; "he doesn't gabble."

"If you do not mind painting before me," said the visitor, "I should be glad if you would continue whilst I look into this picture."

Gatty painted. The visitor held his tongue.

At first the silence made the artist uneasy, but by degrees it began to give him pleasure; whoever this was, it was not one of the flies that had hitherto stung him, nor the jackdaws that had chattered him dead.

Glorious silence! he began to paint under its influence like one inspired. Half an hour passed thus.

"What is the price of this work of art?"

"Eighty pounds."

"I take it," said his visitor quietly.

What, no more difficulty than that? He felt almost disappointed at gaining his object so easily.

"I am obliged to you, sir; much obliged to you," he added, for he reflected what eighty pounds were to him just then.

"It is my descendants who are obliged to you," replied the gentleman; "the picture is immortal!"

These words were an epoch in the painter's life.

The grave, silent inspection that had preceded them, the cool, deliberate, masterly tone in which they were said, made them oracular to him.

Words of such import took him by surprise.

He had thirsted for average praise in vain.

A hand had taken him, and placed him at the top of the tree.

He retired abruptly, or he would have burst into tears.

He ran to his mother.

"Mother," said he, "I am a painter; I always thought so at bottom, but I suppose it is the height of my ideas makes me discontented with my work."

"What has happened?"

"There is a critic in my room. I had no idea there was a critic in the creation, and there is one in my room."

"Has he bought your picture, my poor boy?" said Mrs. Gatty distrustfully.

To her surprise he replied, "Yes! he has got it; only eighty pounds for an immortal picture."

Mrs. Gatty was overjoyed, Gatty was a little sad; but reviving, he professed himself glad; the picture was going to a judge.

"It is not much money," said he, "but the man has spoken words that are ten thousand pounds to me."

He returned to the room; his visitor, hat in hand, was about to go; a few words were spoken about the art of painting, this led to a conversation, and then to a short discussion.

The new-comer soon showed Mr. Charles Gatty his ignorance of facts.

This man had sat quietly before a multitude of great pictures, new and old, in Europe.

He cooled down Charles Gatty, Esq., monopolist of nature and truth.

He quoted to him thirty painters in Germany, who paint every stroke of a landscape in the open air, and forty in various nations who had done it in times past.

"You, sir," he went on, "appear to hang on the skirts of a certain clique, who handle the brush well, but draw ill, and look at nature through the spectacles of certain ignorant painters who spoiled canvas four hundred years ago.

"Go no farther in that direction.

"Those boys, like all quacks, have one great truth which they disfigure with more than one falsehood.

"Hold fast their truth, which is a truth the world has always possessed, though its practice has been confined to the honest and laborious few.

"Eschew their want of mind and taste.

"Shrink with horror from that profane *culte de laideur*, that 'love of the lop-sided,' they have recovered from the foul receptacles of decayed art."

He reminded him further, that "Art is not imitation, but illusion; that a plumber and glazier of our day and a mediæval painter are more alike than any two representatives of general styles that can be found; and for the same reason, namely, that with each of these, art is in its infancy; these two sets of bunglers have not learned how to produce the illusions of art."

To all this he added a few words of compliment on the mind, as well as mechanical dexterity, of the purchased picture, bade him good morning, and glided away like a passing sunbeam.

"A mother's blessing is a great thing to have, and to deserve," said Mrs. Gatty, who had rejoined her son.

"It is, indeed," said Charles. He could not help being struck by the coincidence.

He had made a sacrifice to his mother, and in a few hours one of his troubles had melted away.

In the midst of these reflections arrived Mr. Saunders with a note.

The note contained a cheque for one hundred and fifty pounds, with these lines, in which the writer excused himself for the amendment: "I am a painter myself," said he, "and it is impossible that eighty pounds can remunerate the time expended on this picture, to say nothing of the skill."

We have treated this poor boy's picture hitherto with just contempt, but now that it is gone into a famous collection, mind, we always admired it; we always said so, we take our oath we did; if we have hitherto deferred framing it, that was merely because it was not sold.

MR. GATTY'S PICTURE, AT PRESENT IN THE COLLECTION OF LORD IPSDEN!

There was, hundreds of years ago, a certain Bishop of Durham, who used to fight in person against the Scotch, and defeat them. When he was not with his flock, the northern wolves sometimes scattered it; but when the holy father was there, with his prayers and his battle-axe, England won the day!

This nettled the Scottish king, so he penetrated one day, with a large band, as far as Durham itself, and for a short time blocked the prelate up in his stronghold. This was the period of Mr. Gatty's picture;

Whose title was,

"Half Church of God, half Tower against the Scot."

In the background was the cathedral, on the towers of which paced to and fro men in armour, with the western sun glittering thereon. In the centre, a horse and cart, led by a boy, were carrying a sheaf of arrows, tied with a straw-band. In part of the foreground was the prelate, in a half suit of armour, but bareheaded; he was turning away from the boy, to whom his sinking hand had indicated his way into the holy

castle, and his benignant glance rested on a child, whom its mother was holding up for his benediction. In the foreground the afternoon beams sprinkled gold on a long glassy slope, corresponding to the elevation on which the cathedral stood, separated by the river Wear from the group; and these calm beauties of Nature, with the mother and child, were the peaceful side of this twofold story.

Such are the dry details. But the soul of its charm no pen can fling on paper. For the stately cathedral stood and lived: the little leaves slumbered yet lived, and the story floated and lived, in the potable gold of summer afternoon.

To look at this painted poem was to feel a thrill of pleasure in bare existence; it went through the eyes, where paintings stop, and warmed the depths and recesses of the heart with its sunshine and its glorious air.

CHAPTER XIII

"WHAT is in the wind this dark night? Six Newhaven boats and twenty boys and hobble-de-hoys, hired by the Johnstones at half-a-crown each for a night's job."

"Secret service!"

"What is it for?"

"I think it is a smuggling lay," suggested Flucker, "but we shall know all in good time."

"Smuggling!" Their countenances fell, they had hoped for something more nearly approaching the illegal.

"Maybe she has fand the herrin'," said a ten-year-old.

"Haw! haw! haw!" went the others. "She find the herrin', when there's five hundred fishermen after them baith sides the Firrth."

The youngster was discomfited.

In fact the expedition bore no signs of fishing.

The six boats sailed at sundown, led by Flucker, he brought-to on the south side of Inch Keith, and nothing happened for about an hour.

Then such boys as were awake, saw two great eyes of light coming up from Granton; rattle went the chain cable, and Lord Ipsden's cutter swung at anchor in four fathom water.

A thousand questions to Flucker.

A single puff of tobacco smoke was his answer.

And now crept up a single eye of light from Leith; she

came among the boats; the boys recognised a crazy old cutter from Leith Harbour, with Christie Johnstone on board.

"What is that brown heap on her deck?"

"A mountain of nets—fifty stout herring nets."

Tunc manifesta fides.

A yell burst from all the boys.

"He's gaun to tak us to Dunbar."

"Half-a-croown! ye're no blate."

Christie ordered the boats alongside her cutter, and five nets were dropped into each boat, six into Flucker's.

The depth of water was given them, and they were instructed to shoot their nets so as to keep a fathom and a half above the rocky bottom.

A herring net is simply a wall of meshes twelve feet deep, fifty feet long; it sinks to a vertical position by the weight of net twine, and is kept from sinking to the bottom of the sea by bladders or corks. These nets are tied to one another, and paid out at the stern of the boat. Boat and nets drift with the tide, if therefore the nets touched the rocks they would be torn to pieces, and the fisherman ruined.

And this saves the herring—that fish lies hours and hours at the very bottom of the sea, like a stone, and the poor fisherman shall drive with his nets, a yard or two over a square mile of fish, and not catch a herring tail; on the other hand, if they rise to play for five minutes, in that five minutes they shall fill seven hundred boats.

At nine o'clock all the boats had shot their nets, and Christie went alongside his Lordship's cutter; he asked her many questions about herring fishery, to which she gave clear answers, derived from her father, who had always been what the fishermen call a lucky fisherman; that is, he had opened his eyes and judged for himself.

Lord Ipsden then gave her blue lights to distribute among the boats, that the first which caught herring might signal all hands.

This was done, and all was expectation.

Eleven o'clock came—no signal from any boat.

Christie became anxious; at last she went round to the boats; found the boys all asleep, except the baddish boy; waked them up, and made them all haul in their first net. The nets came in as black as ink, no sign of a herring.

There was but one opinion; there was no herring at Inch Keith; they had not been there this seven years.

At last, Flucker, to whom she came in turn, told her he

was going into two fathom water, where he would let out the bladders and drop the nets on their cursed backs.

A strong remonstrance was made by Christie, but the baddish boy insisted that he had an equal right in all her nets, and setting his sail, he ran into shoal water.

Christie began to be sorrowful: instead of making money she was going to throw it away, and the ne'er-do-well Flucker would tear six nets from the ropes.

Flucker hauled down his sail, and unstepped his mast in two fathom water; but he was not such a fool as to risk his six nets; he devoted one to his experiment, and did it well; he let out his bladder line a fathom, so that one-half his net would literally be higgledy-piggledy with the rocks, unless the fish were there *en masse*.

No long time was required.

In five minutes he began to haul in the net; first, the boys hauled in the rope, and then the net began to approach the surface. Flucker looked anxiously down, the other lads incredulously; suddenly they all gave a yell of triumph—an appearance of silver and lightning mixed, had glanced up from the bottom; in came the first two yards of the net—there were three herrings in it. These three proved Flucker's point as well as three million.

They hauled in the net. Before they had a quarter of it in, the net came up to the surface, and the sea was alive with molten silver. The upper half of the net was empty, but the lower half was one solid mass of fish.

The boys could not find a mesh, they had nothing to handle but fish.

At this moment the easternmost boat showed a blue light.

"The fish are rising," said Flucker, "we'll na risk nae mair nets."

Soon after this a sort of song was heard from the boat that had showed a light. Flucker, who had got his net in, ran down to her, and found, as he suspected, that the boys had not power to draw the weight of fish over the gunwale.

They were singing, as sailors do, that they might all pull together; he gave them two of his crew, and ran down to his own skipper. The said skipper gave him four men.

Another blue light!

Christie and her crew came a little nearer the boats, and shot twelve nets.

The yachtsmen entered the sport with zeal, so did his Lordship.

The boats were all full in a few minutes, and nets still out.

Then Flucker began to fear some of these nets would sink with the weight of fish; for the herring die after a while in a net, and a dead herring sinks.

What was to be done?

They got two boats alongside the cutter, and unloaded them into her, as well as they could; but before they could half do this the other boats hailed them.

They came to one of them; the boys were struggling with a thing which no stranger would have dreamed was a net.

Imagine a white sheet, fifty feet long, varnished with red-hot silver; there were twenty barrels in this single net. By dint of fresh hands they got half of her in, and then the meshes began to break; the men leaned over the gunwale, and put their arms round blocks and masses of fish, and so flung them on board; and the cod-fish and dog-fish snapped them almost out of the men's hands, like tigers.

At last, they came to a net, which was a double wall of herring; it had been some time in the water, and many of the fish were dead; they tried their best, but it was impracticable; they laid hold of the solid herring, and when they lifted up a hundredweight clear of the water, away it all tore, and sank back again.

They were obliged to cut away this net, with twenty pounds sterling in her. They cut away the twine from the head-ropes, and net and fish went to the bottom.

All hands were now about the cutter; Christie's nets were all strong and new; they had been some time in the water; in hauling them up her side, quantities of fish fell out of the net into the water, but there were enough left.

She averaged twelve barrels a net.

Such of the yawls as were not quite full, crept between the cutter and the nets, and caught all they wanted.

The projector of this fortunate speculation suddenly announced that she was very sleepy.

Flucker rolled her up in a sail, and she slept the sleep of infancy on board her cutter.

When she awoke it was seven o'clock in the morning, and her cutter was creeping with a smart breeze, about two miles an hour, a mile from Newhaven Pier.

The yacht had returned to Granton, and the yawls, very low in the water, were creeping along like snails, with both sails set.

The news was in Edinburgh long before they landed.

They had been discerned under Inch Keith at the dawn.

And the manner of their creeping along, when there was such a breeze, told the tale at once to the keen, experienced eyes that are sure to be scanning the sea.

Donkey carts came rattling down from the capital.

Merchants came pelting down to Newhaven Pier.

The whole story began to be put together by bits, and comprehended.

Old Johnstone's cleverness was recalled to mind.

The few fishermen left at Newhaven were ready to kill themselves.

Their wives were ready to do the same good office for La Johnstone.

Four Irish merchants agreed to work together, and to make a show of competition, the better to keep the price down within bounds.

It was hardly fair four men against one innocent unguarded female. But this is a wicked world.

Christie landed, and proceeded to her own house; on the way she was met by Jean Carnie, who debarrassed her of certain wrappers, and a handkerchief she had tied round her head, and informed her she was the pride of Newhaven.

She next met these four little merchants, one after another.

And since we ought to dwell as little as possible upon scenes in which unguarded innocence is exposed to artful conspiracies, we will put a page or two into the brute form of dramatic dialogue, and so sail through it quicker.

1st Merchant. "Where are ye going, Meggie?"

Christie Johnstone. "If onybody asks ye, say ye dinna ken."

1st Mer. "Will ye sell your fish?"

Christie. "Suner than gie them."

1st Mer. "You will be asking fifteen shillin' the cran."

Christie. "And ten to that."

1st. Mer. "Good morning."

2nd Mer. "Would he not go over fifteen shillings? Oh, the thief o' the world!—I'll give sixteen."

3rd Mer. "But I'll give eighteen."

2nd Mer. "More fool you! Take him up, my girl."

Christie. "Twenty-five is my price the day."

3rd Mer. "You will keep them till Sunday week and sell their bones." [*Exeunt the three Merchants.*

Enter 4th Merchant.

4th Mer. "Are your fish sold?—I'll give sixteen shillings."

Christie. "I'm seeking twenty-five, an' I'm offered eighteen."

4th Mer. "Take it." [*Exit.*

Christie. "They hae putten their heads thegither."

Here Flucker came up to her, and told her there was a Leith merchant looking for her. "And Custy," said he, "there's plenty wind getting up, your fish will be sair hashed; put them off your hands, I rede ye."

Christie. "Ay, lad!—Flucker, hide, an' when I play my hand sae, ye'll run in an' cry, 'Cirsty, the Irishman will gie ye twenty-two schellin the cran.'"

Flucker. "Ye ken mair than's in the catecheesm, for as releegious as ye are."

The Leith merchant was Mr. Miller, and this is the way he worked

Miller (*in a mellifluous voice*). "Are ye no fatigued, my deear?"

Christie (*affecting fatigue*). "Indeed, sir, and I am."

Miller. "Shall I have the pleasure to deal wi' ye?"

Christie. "If it's your pleasure, sir. I'm seekin' twenty-five schellin."

Miller (*pretending not to hear*). "As you are a beginner, I must offer fair; twenty schellin you shall have, and that's three shillings above Dunbar."

Christie. "Wad ye even carted herrin' with my fish caller frae the sea? and Dunbar—oh fine! ye ken there's nae herrin' at Dunbar the morn; this is the Dunbar schule that slipped westward: I'm the mairket, ye'll hae to buy o' me or gang to your bed—(*Here she signalled to Flucker*). I'll no be oot o' mine lang."

Enter Flucker hastily, crying: "Cirsty, the Irishman will gie ye twenty-two schellin."

"I'll no tak it," said Christie.

"They are keen to hae them," said Flucker; and hastily retired, as if to treat farther with the small merchants.

On this Mr. Miller, pretending to make for Leith, said carelessly, "Twenty-three shillings, or they are not for me."

"Tak the cutter's freight at a hundre' cran, an' I'm no caring," said Christie.

"They are mine!" said Mr. Miller, very sharply. "How much shall I give you the day?"

"Auchty pund, sir, if you please—the lave when you like; I ken ye, Mr. Miller."

Whilst counting her the notes, the purchaser said slyly to her—

"There's more than a hundred cran in the cutter, my woman."

"A little, sir," replied the vendor; "but ere I could count

them till ye by baskets, they would lose seven or eight cran in book,[1] your gain, my loss."

"You are a vara intelligent young person," said Mr. Miller gravely.

"Ye had measured them wi' your walking-stick, sir; there's just ae scale ye didna wipe off, though ye are a carefu' mon, Mr. Miller; sae I laid the bait for ye an' fine ye took it."

Miller took out his snuff-box, and tapping it, said—

"Will ye go into partnership with me, my dear?"

"Ay, sir!" was the reply. "When I'm aulder an' ye're younger."

At this moment the four merchants, believing it useless to disguise their co-operation, returned to see what could be done.

"We shall give you a guinea a barrel."

"Why, ye offered her twenty-two shillings before."

"That we never did, Mr. Miller."

"Haw! haw!" went Flucker.

Christie looked down and blushed.

Eyes met eyes, and without a word spoken all was comprehended and silently approved. There was no nonsense uttered about morality in connection with dealing.

Mr. Miller took an enormous pinch of snuff, and drew for the benefit of all present the following inference:

MR. MILLER'S APOPHTHEGM.

"Friends and neighbours! when a man's heed is grey with age and thoucht (*pause*)—he's just fit to go to schule to a young lass o' twenty."

There was a certain middle-aged fishwife, called Beeny Liston, a tenant of Christie Johnstone's; she had not paid her rent for some time, and she had not been pressed for it; whether this, or the whisky she was in the habit of taking, rankled in her mind, certain it is she had always an ill word for her landlady. She now met her, envied her success, and called out in a coarse tone—

"Oh, ye're a gallant quean; ye'll be waur than ever the noo."

"What's wrang, if ye please?" said the Johnstone sharply.

Reader, did you ever see two fallow bucks commence a duel?

They strut round, eight yards apart, tails up, look carefully another way to make the other think it all means nothing, and being both equally sly, their horns come together as if by concert.

[1] Bulk.

Even so commenced this duel of tongues between these two heroines.

Beeny Liston, looking at everybody but Christie, addressed the natives who were congregating, thus—

"Did ever ye hear o' a decent lass taking the herrin' oot o' the men's mooths—is yon a woman's pairt, I'm asking ye?"

On this, Christie, looking carefully at all the others except Beeny, inquired with an air of simple curiosity—

"Can onybody tell me wha Liston Carnie's drunken wife is speakin till? no to ony decent lass, though. Na! ye ken she wad na hae th' impudence!"

"Oh, ye ken fine I'm speakin' till yoursel'."

Here the horns clashed together.

"To me, woman? (*with admirably acted surprise*). Oo, ay! it will be for the twa years' rent you're awin me. Giest!"

Beeny Liston. "Ye're just the impudentest girrl i' the toon, an' ye hae proved it the day" (*her arms akimbo*).

Christie (*arms akimbo*). "Me, impudent? how daur ye speak against my charăckter, that's kenned for decency o' baith sides the Firrth."

Beeny (*contemptuously*). "Oh, ye're sly enough to beguile the men, but we ken ye."

Christie. "I'm no sly—and (*drawing near and hissing the words*) I'm no like the woman Jean an' I saw in Rose Street, dead drunk on the causeway, while her mon was working for her at sea. If ye're no ben your hoose in ae minute, I'll say that will gar Liston Carnie fling ye ower the pier-head, ye fool-moothed drunken leear—Scairt!"[1]

If my reader has seen and heard Mademoiselle Rachel utter her famous *Sortez*, in "Virginie," he knows exactly with what a gesture and tone the Johnstone uttered this word.

Beeny (*in a voice of whining surprise*). "Hech! what a spite Flucker Johnstone's dochter has taen against us."

Christie. "Scairt!"

Beeny (*in a coaxing voice and moving a step*). "Aweel! what's a' your paession, my boenny woman?"

Christie. "Scairt!"

Beeny retired before the thunder and lightning of indignant virtue.

Then all the fishboys struck up a dismal chant of victory.

"Yoo-hoo—Custy's won the day—Beeny's scair-*tit*," going up on the last syllable.

Christie moved slowly away towards her own house, but

[1] A local word; a corruption from the French *sortez*.

before she could reach the door she began to whimper—little fool. Thereat chorus of young Athenians chanted—

"Yu-hoo! come back, Beeny, ye'll maybe win yet. Custy's away gree-*tin*" (*going up on the last syllable*).

"I'm no greetin, ye rude bairns," said Christie, bursting into tears, and retiring as soon as she had effected that proof of her philosophy. It was about four hours later; Christie had snatched some repose. The wind, as Flucker prognosticated, had grown to a very heavy gale, and the Firth was brown and boiling. Suddenly a clamour was heard on the shore, and soon after a fishwife made her appearance with rather a singular burden. Her husband, ladies: *rien que cela.*

She had him by the scruff of the neck; he was *dos-à-dos*, with his booted legs kicking in the air, and his fists making warlike but idle demonstrations, and his mouth uttering ineffectual bad language.

This worthy had been called a coward by Sandy Liston, and being about to fight with him, and get thrashed, his wife had whipped him up, and carried him away; she now flung him down, at some risk to his equilibrium.

"Ye are not fit to feicht wi' Sandy Liston," said she; "if ye are for feichtin, here's for ye."

As a comment to this proposal, she tucked up the sleeves of her short gown. He tried to run by her; she caught him by the bosom, and gave him a violent push, that sent him several paces backwards; he looked half fierce, half astounded; ere he could quite recover himself, his little servant forced a pipe into his hand, and he smoked contented and peaceable.

Before tobacco the evil passions fall, they tell me.

The cause of this quarrel soon explained itself; up came Sandy Liston, cursing and swearing.

"What! ye hae gotten till your wife's; that's the place for ye;—to say there's a brig in distress, and ye'll let her go on the rocks under your noses: but what are ye afraid o'? there's na danger!"

"Nae danger!" said one of the reproached, "are ye fou?"

"Ye are fou wi' fear yoursel'; of a' the beasts that crawl the airth, a cooward is the ugliest, I think."

"The wifes will no let us," said one sulkily.

"It's the woman in your hairts that keeps ye," roared Sandy hoarsely; "curse ye, ye are sure to dee ane day, and ye are sure to be ——! (a past participle) soon or late, what signifies when? Oh! curse the hour ever I was born amang sic a cooardly crew." (*Gun at sea.*)

"There!"

"She speaks till ye hersel'; she cries for maircy; to think that of a' that hear ye cry, Alexander Liston is the only mon mon enough to answer." (*Gun.*)

"You are mistaken, Mr. Alexander Liston," said a clear, smart voice, whose owner had mingled unobserved with the throng; "there are always men to answer such occasions; now, my lads, your boats have plenty of beam, and well handled, should live in any sea; who volunteers with Alexander Liston and me?" The speaker was Lord Ipsden.

The fishwives of Newhaven, more accustomed to measure men than poor little Lady Barbara Sinclair, saw in this man, what in point of fact he was, a cool daring devil, than whom none more likely to lead men into mortal danger, or pull them through it, for that matter.

They recognised their natural enemy, and collected together against him, like hens at the sight of a hawk.

"And would you really entice our men till their death?"

"My life's worth as much as theirs, I suppose."

"Nae! your life! it's na worth a button; when you dee, your next kin will dance, and wha'll greet? but our men hae wife and bairns to look till." (*Gun at sea.*)

"Ah! I didn't look at it in that light," said Lord Ipsden. He then demanded paper and ink; Christie Johnstone, who had come out of her house, supplied it from her treasures, and this cool hand actually began to convey a hundred and fifty thousand pounds away, upon a sheet of paper blowing in the wind; when he had named his residuary legatee, and disposed of certain large bequests, he came to the point—

"Christie Johnstone, what can these people live on? two hundred a year? living is cheap here—confound the wind!"

"Twa hundred? Fifty! Vile Count."

"Don't call me Vile Count. I am Ipsden, and my name's Richard. Now, then, be smart with your names."

Three men stepped forward, gave their names, had their widows provided for, and went for their sou'westers, &c.

"Stay," said Lord Ipsden, writing. "To Christina Johnstone, out of respect for her character, one thousand pounds."

"Richard! dinna gang," cried Christie, "oh! dinna gang, dinna gang, dinna gang; it's no your business."

"Will you lend me your papa's Flushing jacket and sou'-wester, my dear? If I was sure to be drowned, I'd go!"

Christie ran in for them. In the meantime, discomposed by the wind, and by feelings whose existence neither he, nor I,

nor any one suspected, Saunders, after a sore struggle between the frail man and the perfect domestic, blurted out—

"My Lord, I beg your Lordship's pardon, but it blows tempestuous."

"That is why the brig wants us," was the reply.

"My Lord, I beg your Lordship's pardon," whimpered Saunders.

"But oh! my Lord, don't go; it's all very well for fishermen to be drowned; it is their business, but not yours, my Lord."

"Saunders, help me on with this coat."

Christie had brought it.

"Yes, my Lord," said Saunders briskly, his second nature reviving.

His Lordship, whilst putting on the coat and hat, undertook to cool Mr. Saunders's aristocratic prejudices.

"Should Alexander Liston and I be drowned," said he coolly, "when our bones come ashore, you will not know which are the fisherman's, and which the Viscount's." So saying, he joined the enterprise.

"I shall pray for ye, lad," said Christie Johnstone, and she retired for that purpose.

Saunders, with a heavy heart, to the nearest tavern, to prepare an account of what he called "Heroism in High Life," large letters, and the usual signs of great astonishment ! ! ! ! ! ! for the *Polytechnic Magazine*.

The commander of the distressed vessel had been penny-wise. He had declined a pilot off the Isle of May, trusting to fall in with one close to the port of Leith; but a heavy gale and fog had come on; he knew himself in the vicinity of dangerous rocks; and, to make matters worse, his ship, old and sore battered by a long and stormy voyage, was leaky; and unless a pilot came alongside, his fate would be, either to founder, or run upon the rocks, where he must expect to go to pieces in a quarter of an hour.

The Newhaven boat lay in comparatively smooth water, on the lee side of the pier.

Our adventurers got into her, stepped the mast, set a small sail, and ran out! Sandy Liston held the sheet, passed once round the belaying-pin, and whenever a larger wave than usual came at them, he slacked the sheet, and the boat losing her way, rose gently, like a cork, upon seas that had seemed about to swallow her.

But seen from the shore it was enough to make the most experienced wince; so completely was this wooden shell lost

to sight, as she descended from a wave, that each time her reappearance seemed a return from the dead.

The weather was misty—the boat was soon lost sight of —the story remains ashore.

CHAPTER XIV

It was an hour later; the natives of the New Town had left the pier, and were about their own doors, when three Buckhaven fishermen came slowly up from the pier; these men had arrived in one of their large fishing-boats which defy all weather. The men came slowly up; their petticoat trousers were drenched, and their neck-handkerchiefs and hair were wet with spray.

At the foot of the New Town they stood still and whispered to each other. There was something about these men that drew the eye of Newhaven upon them.

In the first place, a Buckhaven man rarely communicates with natives of Newhaven, except at the pier, where he brings in his cod and ling from the deep sea; flings them out like stones, and sells them to the fishwives; then up sail and away for Fifeshire. But these men evidently came ashore to speak to some one in the town.

They whispered together; something appeared to be proposed and demurred to; but at last two went slowly back towards the pier, and the eldest remained, with a fisherman's long mackintosh coat in his hand, which the others had given him as they left him. With this in his hand, the Buckhaven fisherman stood in an irresolute posture; he looked down, and seemed to ask himself what course he should take.

"What's wrang?" said Jean Carnie, who, with her neighbours, had observed the men; "I wish yon man may na hae ill news."

"What ill news wad he hae?" replied another.

"Are ony freends of Liston Carnie here?" said the fisherman.

"The wife's awa' to Granton, Beeny Liston they ca' her—there's his house," added Jean, pointing up the row.

"Ay," said the fisherman, "I ken he lived there."

"Lived there!" cried Christie Johnstone; "oh! what's this?"

"Freends," said the man gravely, "his boat is driving keel uppermost in Kircauldy Bay;—we passed her near enough to read the name upon her."

"But the men will have won to shore, please God?"

The fisherman shook his head.

"She'll hae coupit a mile wast Inch Keith, an' the tide rinning aff the island an' a heavy sea gaun. This is a' Newhaven will see of them (*holding up the coat*) till they rise to the top in three weeks' time."

The man then took the coat, which was now seen to be drenched with water, and hung it up on a line not very far from its unfortunate owner's house: then, in the same grave and subdued tone in which he had spoken all along, he said, "We are sorry to bring siccan a tale into your toon," and slowly moved off to rejoin his comrades, who had waited for him at no great distance. They then passed through the Old Town, and in five minutes the calamity was known to the whole place.

After the first stupor, the people in the New Town collected into knots, and lamented their hazardous calling, and feared for the lives of those that had just put to sea in this fatal gale, for the rescue of strangers, and the older ones failed not to match this present sorrow with others within their recollection.

In the middle of this, Flucker Johnstone came hastily in from the Old Town, and told them he had seen the wife, Beeny Liston, coming through from Granton.

The sympathy of all was instantly turned in this direction.

"She would hear the news."

"It would fall on her like a thunder-clap."

"What would become of her?"

Every eye was strained towards the Old Town, and soon the poor woman was seen about to emerge from it; but she was walking in her usual way, and they felt she could not carry her person so if she knew.

At the last house she was seen to stop and speak to a fisherman and his wife that stood at their own door.

"They are telling her," was then the cry.

Beeny Liston then proceeded on her way. Every eye was strained. No! they had not told her.

She came gaily on, the unconscious object of every eye and every heart.

The hands of this people were hard, and their tongues rude, but they had shrunk from telling this poor woman of her bereavement—they thought it kinder she should know it under her own roof from her friends or neighbours, than from comparative strangers. She drew near her own door. And now a knot collected round Christie Johnstone, and urged her to undertake the sad task.

'Ye that speak sa learned, Christie, ye should tell her; we daur na."

"How can I tell her?" said Christie, turning pale. "How will I tell her? I'se try."

She took one trembling step to meet the woman.

Beeny's eye fell upon her.

"Ay! here's the Queen o' Newhaven," cried she, in a loud and rather coarse voice. "The men will hae ta leave the place now y' are turned fisherman, I daur say."

"Oh, dinna fleicht on me! dinna fleicht on me!" cried Christie, trembling.

"Maircy on us," said the other, "auld Flucker Johnstone's dochter turned humble. What next?"

"I'm vexed for speaking back till ye this morn," faltered Christie.

"Hett," said the woman carelessly, "let yon flea stick i' the wa'. I fancy I began on ye. Aweel, Cirsty," said she, falling into a friendlier tone, "it's the place we live in spoils us—Newhaven's an impudent toon, as sure as deeth.

"I passed through the Auld Toon the noo—a place I never speak in; an' if they did na glower at me as I had been a strange beast.

"They cam' to their very doors to glower at me; if ye'll believe me, I thoucht shame.

"At the hinder end my passion got up, and I faced a wife East-by, and I said, 'What gars ye glower at me that way, ye ignorant woman?' ye would na think it, she answered like honey itsel'—'I'm askin' your paardon,' says she; and her mon by her side said, 'Gang hame to your ain hoose, my woman, and Gude help ye, and help us a' at our need,' the decent mon. 'It's just there I'm for,' said I, 'to get my mon his breakfast.'"

All who heard her drew their breath with difficulty.

The woman then made for her own house, but in going up the street she passed the wet coat hanging on the line.

She stopped directly. They all trembled—they had forgotten the coat—it was all over; the coat would tell the tale.

"Aweel," said she, "I could sweer that's Liston Carnie's coat, a' droukit wi' the rain;" then she looked again at it, and added slowly, "if I did na ken he has his away wi' him at the piloting." And in another moment she was in her own house, leaving them all standing there half stupefied.

Christie had indeed endeavoured to speak, but her tongue had cloven to her mouth.

Whilst they stood looking at one another, and at Beeny Liston's door, a voice that seemed incredibly rough, loud, and harsh, jarred upon them; it was Sandy Liston, who came in from Leith, shouting—

"Fifty pounds for salvage, lasses! is na thaat better than staying cooard-like aside the women?"

"Whisht! whisht!" cried Christie. "We are in heavy sorrow; puir Liston Carnie and his son Willy lie deed at the bottom o' the Firrth."

"Gude help us!" said Sandy, and his voice sank.

"An', oh, Sandy, the wife does na ken, and its hairt-breaking to see her, and hear her; we canna get her tell't; ye're the auldest mon here; ye'll tell her, will ye no, Sandy?"

"No me, that I will not!"

"Oh, yes; ye are kenned for yoor stoot heart, an' coorage; ye come fra' facing the sea an' wind in a bit yawl."

"The sea and the wind," cried he contemptuously; "they be ——, I'm used wi' them; but to look a woman i' the face, an' tell her her mon and her son are drowned since yestreen, I hae na coorage for that."

All further debate was cut short by the entrance of one who came expressly to discharge the sad duty all had found so difficult. It was the Presbyterian clergyman of the place; he waved them back. "I know, I know," said he solemnly. "Where is the wife?"

She came out of her house at this moment, as it happened, to purchase something at Drysale's shop, which was opposite.

"Beeny," said the clergyman, "I have sorrowful tidings."

"Tell me them, sir," said she, unmoved. "Is it a deeth?" added she quietly.

"It is!—death, sudden and terrible; in your own house I must tell it you,—(and may God show me how to break it to her)." He entered her house.

"Aweel," said the woman to the others, "it maun be some far awa cousin, or the like, for Liston an' me hae nae near freends. Meg, ye idle hizzy," screamed she to her servant, who was one of the spectators, "your pat is no on yet; div ye think the men will no be hungry when they come in fra the sea?"

"They will never hunger nor thirst ony mair," said Jean solemnly, as the bereaved woman entered her own door.

There ensued a listless and fearful silence.

Every moment some sign of bitter sorrow was expected to break forth from the house, but none came; and amidst the expectation and silence the waves dashed louder and louder, as

it seemed, against the dyke, conscious of what they had done.

At last, in a moment, a cry of agony arose, so terrible that all who heard it trembled, and more than one woman shrieked in return, and fled from the door; at which, the next moment, the clergyman stood alone, collected, but pale, and beckoned. Several women advanced.

"One woman," said he.

Jean Carnie was admitted; and after a while returned.

"She is come to hersel'," whispered she; "I am no weel mysel'." And she passed into her own house. Then Flucker crept to the door to see.

"Oh, dinna spie on her," cried Christie.

"Oh, yes, Flucker," said many voices.

"He is kneelin'," said Flucker. "He has her hand, to gar her kneel tae,—she winna,—she does na see him, nor hear him; he will hae her. He has won her to kneel,—he is prayin', an' greetin aside her. I canna see noo, my een's blinded."

"He's a gude mon," said Christie. "Oh, what wad we do without the ministers?"

Sandy Liston had been leaning sorrowfully against the wall of the next house, he now broke out.

"An auld shipmate at the whale fishing!!! an' noow we'll never lift the dredging sang thegither again, in yon dirty detch that's droowned him; I maun hae whiskey, an' forget it a'."

He made for the spirit-shop like a madman; but ere he could reach the door a hand was laid on him like a vice. Christie Johnstone had literally sprung on him. She hated this horrible vice,—had often checked him; and now it seemed so awful a moment for such a sin, that she forgot the wild and savage nature of the man, who had struck his own sister, and seriously hurt her, but a month before,—she saw nothing but the vice and its victim, and she seized him by the collar, with a grasp from which he in vain attempted to shake himself loose.

"No! ye'll no gang there at siccan a time."

"Hands off, ye daft jaud," roared he, "or there'll be another deeth i' the toon."

At the noise Jean Carnie ran in. "Let the ruffian go," cried she in dismay. "Oh, Christie, dinna put your hand on a lion's mane."

"Yes, I'll put my hand on his mane, ere I'll let him mak a beast o' himsel'."

"Sandy, if ye hurt her, I'll find twenty lads that will lay ye deed at her feet."

"Haud your whisht," said Christie, very sharply, "he's no to be threetened."

Sandy Liston, black and white with rage, ground his teeth together, and said, lifting his hand, "Wull ye let me go, or must I tak my hand till ye?"

"No!" said Christie, "I'll no let ye go, *sae look me i' the face; Flucker's dochter, your auld comrade, that saved your life at Holy Isle,—think o' his face,—an' look in mines—an' strike me!!!*"

They glared on one another,—he fiercely and unsteadily; she, firmly and proudly.

Jean Carnie said afterwards, "her eyes were like coals of fire."

"Ye are doing what nae mon i' the toon daur; ye are a bauld, unwise lassy."

"It's you maks me bauld," was the instant reply. "I saw ye face the mad sea, to save a ship fra the rocks, an' will I fear a mon's hand, when I can save"—(*rising to double her height*)—"my feyther's auld freend fra the puir mon's enemy, the enemy o' mankind, the cursed, cursed drink. Oh! Sandy Liston, hoow could ye think to put an enemy in your mooth to steal awa your brains!"

"This's no Newhaven chat; wha lairns ye sic words o' power?"

"A deed mon!"

"I would na wonder, y' are no canny; she's ta'en a' the poower oot o' my body, I think." Then suddenly descending to a tone of abject submission, "What's your pleesure, Flucker Johnstone's dochter?"

She instantly withdrew the offensive grasp, and leaning affectionately on his shoulder, she melted into her rich Ionic tones.

"It's no a time for sin; ye'll sit by my fire, an' get your dinner; a bonny haggis hae I for you an' Flucker, an' we'll improve this sorrowfu' judgment, an' ye'll tell me' o' auld times; o' my feyther dear, that likeit ye weel, Sandy,—o' the storrms ye hae weathered, side by side,—o' the muckle whales ye killed Greenland way—an' abune a', o' the lives ye hae saved at sea, by your daurin an' your skell; an', oh, Sandy, will na that be better as sit an' poor leequid damnation doown your throat, an' gie awa the sense an' feeling o' a mon for a sair heed and an ill name?"

"I'se gang, my lamb," said the rough man, quite subdued; "I daur say whiskey will no pass my teeth the day." And so he went quietly away, and sat by Christie's fireside.

Jean and Christie went towards the boats. Jean, after taking it philosophically for half a minute, began to whimper.

"What's wrang?" said Christie.

"Div ye think my hairt's no in my mooth wi' you gripping yon fierce robber?"

Here a young fishwife, with a box in her hand, who had followed them, pulled Jean by the coats.

"Hets," said Jean, pulling herself free.

The child then, with a pertinacity these little animals have, pulled Christie's coats.

"Hets," said Christie, freeing herself more gently.

"Ye suld mairry Van Amburgh," continued Jean; "ye are just such a lass as he is a lad."

Christie smiled proudly, was silent, but did not disown the comparison.

The little fishwife, unable to attract attention by pulling, opened her box, and saying, "Lasses, I'll let ye see my presoner: hech! he's boenny!" pulled out a mouse by a string fastened to his tail, and set him in the midst for friendly admiration.

"I dinna like it—I dinna like it!" screamed Christie; "Jean, put it away—it fears me, Jean!" This she uttered (her eyes almost starting from her head with unaffected terror) at the distance of about eight yards, whither she had arrived in two bounds that would have done no discredit to an antelope.

"Het," said Jean uneasily, "hae ye coowed yon savage, to be scared at the wee beastie?"

Christie, looking askaunt at the animal, explained—"A moose is an awesome beast—it's no like a mon!" and still her eye was fixed by fascination upon the four-footed danger.

Jean, who had not been herself in genuine tranquillity, now turned savagely on the little Wombwelless: "An' div ye really think ye are to come here wi' a' the beasts i' the Airk? Come, awa ye go, the pair o' ye."

These severe words, and a smart push, sent the poor little biped off roaring, with the string over her shoulder, recklessly dragging the terrific quadruped, which made fruitless grabs at the shingle.—*Moral.* Don't terrify bigger folk than yourself.

Christie had intended to go up to Edinburgh with her eighty pounds, but there was more trouble in store this eventful day. Flucker went out after dinner, and left her with Sandy Liston, who was in the middle of a yard, when some one came running in and told her Flucker was at the pier crying for her. She inquired what was the matter.—"Come, an' ye'll see," was all the answer.—She ran down to the pier. There was poor Flucker lying on his back; he had slipped from the pier into a boat that lay alongside; the fall was considerable: for

a minute he had been insensible, then he had been dreadfully sick, and now he was beginning to feel his hurt; he was in great anguish; nobody knew the extent of his injuries; he would let nobody touch him; all his cry was for his sister. At last she came; they all made way for her; he was crying for her as she came up.

"My bairn! my bairn!" cried she, and the poor little fellow smiled, and tried to raise himself towards her. She lifted him gently in her arms—she was powerful, and affection made her stronger; she carried him in her arms all the way home, and laid him on her own bed. Willy Liston, her discarded suitor, ran for the surgeon. There were no bones broken, but his ankle was severely sprained, and he had a terrible bruise on the loins; his dark, ruddy face was streaked and pale; but he never complained after he found himself at home.

Christie hovered round him, a ministering angel, applying to him with a light and loving hand whatever could ease his pain; and he watched her with an expression she had never noticed in his eye before. At last, after two hours' silence, he made her sit in full view, and then he spoke to her; and what think you was the subject of his discourse? He turned to and told her, one after another, without preface, all the loving things she had done to him ever since he was five years old. Poor boy, he had never shown much gratitude, but he had forgotten nothing, literally nothing.

Christie was quite overcome with this unexpected trait; she drew him gently to her bosom, and wept over him; and it was sweet to see a brother and sister treat each other almost like lovers, as these two began to do—they watched each other's eye so tenderly. This new care kept the sister in her own house all the next day; but towards the evening, Jean, who knew her other anxiety, slipped in and offered to take her place for an hour by Flucker's side; at the same time she looked one of those signals which are too subtle for any but woman to understand.

Christie drew her aside, and learned that Gatty and his mother were just coming through from Leith; Christie ran for her eighty pounds, placed them in her bosom, cast a hasty glance at a looking-glass, little larger than an oyster-shell, and ran out.

"Hech! What pleased the auld wife will be to see he has a lass that can mak auchty pund in a morning." This was Christie's notion.

At sight of them she took out the bank-notes, and with eyes glistening and cheeks flushing, she cried, "Oh, Chairles,

ye'll no gang to jail—I hae the siller!" and she offered him the money with both hands, and a look of tenderness and modesty that embellished human nature.

Ere he could speak, his mother put out her hand, and not rudely, but very coldly repelling Christie's arm, said in a freezing manner, "We are much obliged to you, but my son's own talents have rescued him from his little embarrassment."

"A nobleman has bought my picture," said Gatty proudly.

"For one hundred and fifty pounds," said the old lady, meaning to mark the contrast between that sum and what Christie had in her hand.

Christie remained like a statue, with her arms extended and the bank-notes in her hand; her features worked—she had much ado not to cry; and any one that had known the whole story, and seen this unmerited repulse, would have felt for her; but her love came to her aid, she put the notes in her bosom, sighed and said, "I would hae likeit to hae been the first, ye ken, but I'm real pleased."

"But, mother," said Gatty, "it was very kind of Christie all the same. Oh, Christie!" said he in a tone of despair.

At this kind word Christie's fortitude was sore tried; she turned away her head;—she was far too delicate to let them know who had sent Lord Ipsden to buy the picture.

Whilst she turned away, Mrs. Gatty said in her son's ear, "Now, I have your solemn promise to do it here, and at once; you will find me on the beach behind these boats—do it."

The reader will understand that during the last few days, Mrs. Gatty had improved her advantage, and that Charles had positively consented to obey her; the poor boy was worn out with the struggle—he felt he must have peace or die; he was thin and pale, and sudden twitches came over him; his temperament was not fit for such a battle: and it is to be observed, nearly all the talk was on one side. He had made one expiring struggle,—he described to his mother an artist's nature, his strength, his weakness,—he besought her not to be a slave to general rules, but to inquire what sort of a companion the individual Gatty needed: he lashed with true but brilliant satire the sort of wife his mother was ready to see him saddled with—a stupid, unsympathising creature, whose ten children would, by nature's law, be also stupid, and so be a weight on him till his dying day. He painted Christie Johnstone, mind and body, in words as true and bright as his colours; he showed his own weak points, her strong ones, and how the latter would fortify the former.

He displayed, in short, in one minute more intellect than his mother had exhibited in sixty years; and that done, with all his understanding, wit, and eloquence, he succumbed like a child, to her stronger will—he promised to break with Christie Johnstone. When Christie had recovered her composure and turned round to her companions, she found herself alone with Charles.

"Chairles," said she gravely.

"Christie," said he uneasily.

"Your mother does na like me. Oh! ye need na deny it; and we are na together as we used to be, my lad."

"She is prejudiced, but she has been the best of mothers to me, Christie."

"Aweel."

"Circumstances compel me to return to England."

(Ah, coward! anything but the real truth!)

"Aweel, Chairles, it will no be for lang."

"I don't know; you will not be so unhappy as I shall—at least I hope not."

"Hoow do ye ken that?"

"Christie, do you remember the first night we danced together?"—"Ay."

"And we walked in the cool by the seaside, and I told you the names of the stars, and you said those were not their real names, but nicknames we give them here on earth. I loved you that first night."

"And I fancied you the first time I set eyes on you."

"How can I leave you, Christie? What shall I do?"

"I ken what I shall do," answered Christie coolly; then bursting into tears, she added, "I shall dee! I shall dee!"

"No! you must not say so; at least I will never love any one but you."

"An' I'll live as I am a' my days for your sake. Oh, England! I hae likeit ye sae weel, ye suld na rob me o' my lad—he's a' the joy I hae!"

"I love you," said Gatty. "Do you love me?" All the answer was, her head upon his shoulder.

"I can't do it," thought Gatty, "and I won't! Christie," said he, "stay here, don't move from here." And he dashed among the boats in great agitation.

He found his mother rather near the scene of the late conference.

"Mother," said he fiercely, like a coward as he was, "ask me no more, my mind is made up for ever; I will not do this

scoundrelly, heartless, beastly, ungrateful action you have been pushing me to so long."

"Take care, Charles, take care," said the old woman, trembling with passion, for this was a new tone for her son to take with her. "You had my blessing the other day, and you saw what followed it; do not tempt me to curse an undutiful, disobedient, ungrateful son."

"I must take my chance," said he desperately; "for I am under a curse any way! I placed my ring on her finger, and held up my hand to God and swore she should be my wife: she has my ring and my oath, and I will not perjure myself even for my mother."

"Your ring! Not the ruby ring I gave you from your dead father's finger—not that! not that!"

"Yes! yes! I tell you yes! and if he was alive, and saw her, and knew her goodness, he would have pity on me, but I have no friend; you see how ill you have made me, but you have no pity; I could not have believed it; but since you have no mercy on me, I will have the more mercy on myself; I marry her to-morrow, and put an end to all this shuffling and manœuvring against an angel! I am not worthy of her, but I'll marry her to-morrow. Good-bye."

"Stay!" said the old woman in a terrible voice; "before you destroy me and all I have lived for, and suffered, and pinched for, hear me; if that ring is not off the hussy's finger in half-an-hour, and you my son again, I fall on this sand and——"

"Then God have mercy upon me, for I'll see the whole creation lost eternally, ere I'll wrong the only creature that is an ornament to the world."

He was desperate; and the weak, driven to desperation, are more furious than the strong. It was by Heaven's mercy that neither mother nor son had time to speak again.

As they faced each other, with flaming eyes and faces, all self-command gone, about to utter hasty words, and lay up regret, perhaps for all their lives to come, in a moment, as if she had started from the earth, Christie Johnstone stood between them!

Gatty's words, and still more, his hesitation, had made her quick intelligence suspect: she had resolved to know the truth; the boats offered every facility for listening—she had heard every word. She stood between the mother and son. They were confused, abashed, and the hot blood began to leave their faces. She stood erect like a statue, her cheek pale as ashes, her eyes glittering like basilisks, she looked at

neither of them. She slowly raised her left hand, she withdrew a ruby ring from it, and dropped the ring on the sand between the two. She turned on her heel, and was gone as she had come, without a word spoken.

They looked at one another, stupefied at first; after a considerable pause the stern old woman stooped, picked up the ring, and in spite of a certain chill that the young woman's majestic sorrow had given her, said, placing it on her own finger, "This is for your wife!!!"

"It will be for my coffin, then," said her son, so coldly, so bitterly, and so solemnly, that the mother's heart began to quake.

"Mother," said he calmly, "forgive me, and accept your son's arm."

"I will, my son!"

"We are alone in the world now, mother."

Mrs. Gatty had triumphed, but she felt the price of her triumph more than her victory. It had been done in one moment, that for which she had so laboured, and it seemed that had she spoken long ago to Christie, instead of Charles, it could have been done at any moment.

Strange to say, for some minutes the mother felt more uneasy than her son; she was a woman after all, and could measure a woman's heart, and she saw how deep the wound she had given one she was now compelled to respect. Charles, on the other hand, had been so harassed backwards and forwards, that to him certainty was relief; it was a great matter to be no longer called upon to decide. His mother had said, "Part," and now Christie had said "Part;" at least the affair was taken out of his hands, and his first feeling was a heavenly calm. In this state he continued for about a mile, and he spoke to his mother about his art, sole object now; but after the first mile he became silent, distrait; Christie's pale face, her mortified air, when her generous offer was coldly repulsed, filled him with remorse: finally, unable to bear it, yet not daring to speak, he broke suddenly from his mother without a word, and ran wildly back to Newhaven; he looked back only once, and there stood his mother, pale with her hands piteously lifted towards heaven.

By the time he got to Newhaven he was as sorry for her as for Christie. He ran to the house of the latter; Flucker and Jean told him she was on the beach. He ran to the beach! he did not see her at first, but presently looking back, he saw her, at the edge of the boats, in company with a gentleman in a boating dress. He looked—could he believe

his eyes? he saw Christie Johnstone kiss this man's hand, who then taking her head gently in his two hands, placed a kiss upon her brow, whilst she seemed to yield lovingly to the caress.

Gatty turned faint, sick; for a moment everything swam before his eyes; he recovered himself, they were gone. He darted round to intercept them; Christie had slipped away somewhere; he encountered the man alone!

CHAPTER XV

CHRISTIE'S situation requires to be explained.

On leaving Gatty and his mother, she went to her own house. Flucker—who after looking upon her for years as an inconvenient appendage, except at dinner-time, had fallen in love with her in a manner that was half pathetic, half laughable, all things considered—saw by her face she had received a blow, and raising himself in the bed, inquired anxiously, "What ailed her?"

At these kind words, Christie Johnstone laid her cheek upon the pillow beside Flucker's, and said, "Oh, my laamb, be kind to your puir sister fra this hoor, for she has naething i' the warld noo but yoursel'."

Flucker began to sob at this. Christie could not cry; her heart was like a lump of lead in her bosom; but she put her arm round his neck, and at the sight of his sympathy she panted heavily, but could not shed a tear—she was sore stricken.

Presently Jean came in, and as the poor girl's head ached as well as her heart, they forced her to go and sit in the air. She took her creepie and sat, and looked on the sea; but whether she looked seaward or landward, all seemed unreal; not things, but hard pictures of things, some moving, some still. Life seemed ended—she had lost her love.

An hour she sat in this miserable trance; she was diverted into a better, because a somewhat less dangerous form of grief, by one of those trifling circumstances that often penetrate to the human heart, when inaccessible to greater things.

Willie the fiddler and his brother came through the town, playing as they went, according to custom; their music floated past Christie's ear like some drowsy chime, until, all of a sudden, they struck up the old English air, "Speed the plough."

Now it was to this tune Charles Gatty had danced with her their first dance the night they made acquaintance.

Christie listened, lifted up her hands, and crying, "Oh, what will I do? what will I do?" burst into a passion of grief. She put her apron over her head, and rocked herself, and sobbed bitterly.

She was in this situation when Lord Ipsden, who was prowling about, examining the proportions of the boats, discovered her.

"Some one in distress—that was all in his way."

"Madam!" said he.

She lifted up her head. "It is Christie Johnstone. I'm so glad; that is, I'm sorry you are crying, but I'm glad I shall have the pleasure of relieving you," and his Lordship began to feel for a cheque-book.

"And div ye really think siller's a cure for every grief?" said Christie bitterly.

"I don't know," said his Lordship; "it has cured them all as yet."

"It will na cure me, then!" and she covered her head with her apron again.

"I am very sorry," said he; "tell me (*whispering*), what is it? poor little Christie!"

"Dinna speak to me; I think shame; ask Jean. O Richard! I'll no be lang in this warld!!!"

"Ah!" said he, "I know too well what it is now: I know, by sad experience. But, Christie, money will cure it in your case, and it shall, too; only instead of five pounds, we must put a thousand pounds or two to your banker's account, and then they will all see your beauty, and run after you."

"How daur ye even to me that I'm seekin' a lad?" cried she, rising from her stool; "I would na care suppose there was na a lad in Britain." And off she flounced.

"Offended her by my gross want of tact," thought the Viscount.

She crept back, and two velvet lips touched his hand. That was because she had spoken harshly to a friend.

"O Richard!" said she despairingly, "I'll no be lang in this warld."

He was touched: and it was then he took her head and kissed her brow, and said, "This will never do; my child, go home and have a nice cry, and I will speak to Jean; and rely upon me, I will not leave the neighbourhood till I have arranged it all to your satisfaction."

And so she went,—a little, a very, very little—comforted by this tone and words.

Now this was all very pretty; but then seen at a distance

of fifty yards, it looked very ugly; and Gatty, who had never before known jealousy, the strongest and worst of human passions, was ripe for anything.

He met Lord Ipsden, and said at once, in his wise temperate way, "Sir, you are a villain!"

Ipsden. "*Plait-il?*"

Gatty. "You are a villain!"

Ipsden. "How do you make that out?"

Gatty. "But, of course, you are not a coward, too."

Ipsden (*ironically*). "You surprise me with your moderation, sir."

Gatty. "Then you will waive your rank—you are a Lord, I believe—and give me satisfaction."

Ipsden. "My rank, sir, such as it is, engages me to give a proper answer to proposals of this sort; I am at your orders."

Gatty. "A man of your character must often have been called to an account by your victims, so—so—"—(hesitating)—"perhaps you will tell me the proper course."

Ipsden. "*I* shall send a note to the castle, and the Colonel will send me down somebody with a moustache: I shall pretend to remember moustache, moustache will pretend he remembers me: he will then communicate with your friend, and they will arrange it all for us."

Gatty. "And, perhaps, through your licentiousness, one or both of us will be killed."

Ipsden. "Yes! but we need not trouble our heads about that—the seconds undertake everything."

Gatty. "I have no pistols."

Ipsden. "If you will do me the honour to use one of mine, it shall be at your service."

Gatty. "Thank you."

Ipsden. "To-morrow morning?"

Gatty. "No. I have four days' painting to do on my picture, I can't die till it is finished;—Friday morning."

Ipsden. "(He is mad.) I wish to ask you a question, you will excuse my curiosity. Have you any idea what we are agreeing to differ about?"

Gatty. "The question does you little credit, my Lord; that is to add insult to wrong."

He went off hurriedly, leaving Lord Ipsden mystified. He thought Christie Johnstone was somehow connected with it; but conscious of no wrong, he felt little disposed to put up with any insult, especially from this boy, to whom he had been kind, he thought. His Lordship was, besides, one of those

good, simple-minded creatures, educated abroad, who, when invited to fight, simply bow, and load two pistols, and get themselves called at six; instead of taking down tomes of casuistry and puzzling their poor brains to find out whether they are game-cocks or capons, and why. As for Gatty, he hurried home in a fever of passion, begged his mother's pardon, and reproached himself for ever having disobeyed her on account of such a perfidious creature as Christie Johnstone.

He then told her what he had seen, as distance and imagination had presented it to him; to his surprise the old lady cut him short.

"Charles," said she, "there is no need to take the girl's character away; she has but one fault—she is not in the same class of life as you, and such marriages always lead to misery; but in other respects she is a worthy young woman —don't speak against her character, or you will make my flesh creep; you don't know what her character is to a woman, high or low."

By this moderation perhaps she held him still faster.

Friday morning arrived. Gatty had, by hard work, finished his picture, collected his sketches from nature, which were numerous, left by memorandum everything to his mother, and was, or rather felt, as ready to die as live. He had hardly spoken a word, or eaten a meal, these four days; his mother was in anxiety about him. He rose early, and went down to Leith; an hour later, his mother, finding him gone out, rose, and went to seek him at Newhaven.

Meantime Flucker had entirely recovered, but his sister's colour had left her cheeks; and the boy swore vengeance against the cause of her distress.

On Friday morning, then, there paced on Leith Sands two figures. One was Lord Ipsden. The other seemed a military gentleman, who having swallowed the mess-room poker, and found it insufficient, had added the ram-rods of his company.

The more his Lordship reflected on Gatty, the less inclined he had felt to invite a satirical young dog from barracks to criticise such a *rencontre;* he had therefore ordered Saunders to get up as a Field-Marshal, or some such trifle, and what Saunders would have called incomparable verticality was the result.

The Painter was also in sight.

Whilst he was coming up, Lord Ipsden was lecturing Marshal Saunders on a point on which that worthy had always

thought himself very superior to his master—"Gentlemanly deportment."

"Now, Saunders, mind and behave like a gentleman, or we shall be found out."

"I trust, my Lord, my conduct——"

"What I mean is, you must not be so overpoweringly gentleman-like, as you are apt to be; no gentleman is so gentleman-like as all that; it could not be borne, *c'est suffoquant;* and a white handkerchief is unsoldier-like—and nobody ties a white handkerchief so well as that; of all the vices, perfection is the most intolerable." His Lordship then touched with his cane the Generalissimo's tie, whose countenance straightway fell, as though he had lost three successive battles.

Gatty came up. They saluted.

"Where is your second, sir?" said the Maréchal.

"My second?" said Gatty. "Ah! I forgot to wake him—does it matter?"

"It is merely a custom," said Lord Ipsden, with a very slightly satirical manner. "Savanadero," said he, "do us the honour to measure the ground, and be everybody's second."

Savanadero measured the ground, and handed a pistol to each combatant, and struck an imposing attitude apart.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" said this Jack-o'-both-sides.

"Yes!" said both.

Just as the signal was about to be given, an interruption occurred.—"I beg your pardon, sir," said Lord Ipsden to his antagonist; "I am going to take a *liberty—a great liberty* with you, but I think you will find your pistol is only at half-cock."

"Thank you, my Lord; what am I to do with the thing?"

"Draw back the cock so, and be ready to fire."

"So?" *Bang!*

He had touched the trigger as well as the cock, so off went the barker; and after a considerable pause the Field-Marshal sprang yelling into the air

"Hallo!" cried Mr. Gatty.

"Ah! oh! I'm a dead man," whined the General.

"Nonsense!" said Ipsden, after a moment of anxiety. "Give yourself no concern, sir," said he, soothingly, to his antagonist —"A mere accident.—Maréchal, reload Mr. Gatty's pistol."

"Excuse me, my Lord——"

"Load his pistol directly," said his Lordship sternly; "and behave like a gentleman."

"My Lord! my Lord! but where shall I stand to be safe?"

"Behind me!"

The Commander of Division advanced reluctantly for Gatty's pistol.

"No, my Lord!" said Gatty, "it is plain I am not a fit antagonist; I shall but expose myself—and my mother has separated us; I have lost her—if you do not win her, some worse man may; but oh! if you are a man use her tenderly."

"Whom?"

"Christie Johnstone! Oh, sir, do not make her regret me too much! She was my treasure, my consolation—she was to be my wife, she would have cheered the road of life—it is a desert now. I loved her—I—I——" Here the poor fellow choked.

Lord Ipsden turned round, and threw his pistol to Saunders, saying, "Catch that, Saunders."

Saunders, on the contrary, by a single motion changed his person from a vertical straight line to a horizontal line, exactly parallel with the earth's surface, and the weapon sang innoxious over him.

His Lordship then, with a noble defiance of etiquette, walked up to his antagonist and gave him his hand, with a motion no one could resist;—for he felt for the poor fellow.

"It is all a mistake," said he. "There is no sentiment between La Johnstone and me but mutual esteem. I will explain the whole thing; *I* admire *her* for her virtue, her wit, her innocence, her goodness, and all that sort of thing; and *she*—what *she* sees in *me*, I am sure I don't know," added he, slightly shrugging his aristocratic shoulders. "Do me the honour to breakfast with me at Newhaven."

"I have ordered twelve sorts of fish at the 'Peacock,' my Lord," said Saunders.

"Divine! (I hate fish.) I told Saunders all would be hungry and none shot; by-the-by, you are winged, I think you said, Saunders?"

"No, my Lord! but look at my trousers."

The bullet had cut his pantaloons.

"I see—only barked; so go and see about our breakfast."

"Yes, my Lord" (*faintly*).

"And draw on me for fifty pounds worth of—new trousers."

"Yes, my Lord" (*sonorously*).

The duellists separated, Gatty taking the short cut to Newhaven; he proposed to take his favourite swim there, to refresh himself before breakfast; and he went from his Lordship a little cheered by remarks which fell from him, and which, though vague, sounded friendly;—poor fellow, except when he had brush in hand he was a dreamer.

This Viscount, who did not seem to trouble his head about class dignity, was to convert his mother from her aristocratic tendencies, or something.

Que sais-je? what will not a dreamer hope?

Lord Ipsden strolled along the sands, and judge his surprise, when, attended by two footmen, he met, at that time in the morning, Lady Barbara Sinclair. Lord Ipsden had been so disheartened and piqued by this lady's conduct, that for a whole week he had not been near her: this line of behaviour sometimes answers. She met him with a grand display of cordiality.

She inquired, "Whether he had heard of a most gallant action, that, coupled with another circumstance (*here she smiled*), had in part reconciled her to the age we live in?"

He asked for further particulars.

She then informed him "that a ship had been ashore on the rocks, that no fisherman dared venture out, that a young gentleman had given them his whole fortune, and so bribed them to accompany him; that he had saved the ship and the men's lives, paid away his fortune, and lighted an odious cigar, and gone home, never minding, amidst the blessings and acclamations of a maritime population."

A beautiful story she told him; so beautiful, in fact, that until she had discoursed ten minutes, he hardly recognised his own feat; but when he did, he blushed inside as well as out with pleasure. Oh! music of music—praise from eloquent lips, and those lips, the lips we love.

The next moment he felt ashamed; ashamed that Lady Barbara should praise him beyond his merits, as he conceived. He made a faint hypocritical endeavour to moderate her eulogium; this gave matters an unexpected turn, Lady Barbara's eyes flashed defiance.

"I say it was a noble action, that one nursed in effeminacy (as you all are), should teach the hardy seamen to mock at peril—noble fellow!"

"He did a man's duty, Barbara."

"Ipsden, take care, you will make me hate you, if you detract from a deed you cannot emulate. This gentleman risked his own life to save others—he is a hero! I should know him by his face the moment I saw him. Oh that I were such a man, or knew where to find such a creature!"

The water came into Lord Ipsden's eyes; he did not know what to say or do; he turned away his head. Lady Barbara was surprised; her conscience smote her.

"Oh, dear," said she, "there now, I have given you pain—

forgive me; we can't all be heroes; dear Ipsden, don't think I despise you now as I used. Oh, no! I have heard of your goodness to the poor, and I have more experience now. There is nobody I esteem more than you, Richard, so you need not look so."

"Thank you, dearest Barbara."

"Yes, and if you were to be such a goose as to write me another letter proposing absurdities to me——"

"Would the answer be different?"

"Very different."

"O Barbara, would you accept?"

"Why, of course not—but I would refuse civilly!"

"Ah!"

"There, don't sigh; I hate a sighing man. I'll tell you something that I know will make you laugh." She then smiled saucily in his face, and said, "Do you remember Mr.——"

L'effrontée! this was the earnest man.

But Ipsden was a match for her this time. "I think I do," said he; "a gentleman who wants to make John Bull little again into John Calf; but it won't do."

Her Ladyship laughed. "Why did you not tell us that on Inch Coombe?"

"Because I had not read 'The Catspaw' then."

"'The Catspaw'? Ah! I thought it could not be you. Whose is it?"

"Mr. Jerrold's."

"Then Mr. Jerrold is cleverer than you."

"It is possible."

"It is certain! Well, Mr. Jerrold and Lord Ipsden, you will both be glad to hear that it was, in point of fact, a bull that confuted the advocate of the Middle Ages; we were walking; he was telling me manhood was extinct except in a few earnest men who lived upon the past, its associations, its truth; when a horrid bull gave—oh—such a bellow! and came trotting up. I screamed and ran—I remember nothing but arriving at the stile, and lo, on the other side, offering me his arm with *empressement* across the wooden barrier was——"

"Well?"

"Well! don't you see?"

"No—oh—yes, I see!—fancy—ah! Shall I tell you how he came to get first over? He ran more earnestly than you."

"It is not Mr. Jerrold this time, I presume," said her satirical Ladyship.

"No! you cannot always have him. I venture to predict

your Ladyship on your return home gave this mediæval personage his *congé*."

"No!"

"No?"

"I gave it him at the stile! Let us be serious, if you please; I have a confidence to make you, Ipsden. Frankly, I owe you some apology for my conduct of late; I meant to be reserved—I have been rude,—but you shall judge me. A year ago you made me some proposals; I rejected them because, though I like you——"

"You like me?"

"I detest your character. Since then, my West India estate has been turned into specie; that specie the bulk of my fortune, placed on board a vessel; that vessel lost, at least we think so—she has not been heard of."

"My dear cousin."

"Do you comprehend that now I am cooler than ever to all young gentlemen who have large incomes, and" (holding out her hand like an angel), "I must trouble you to forgive me."

He kissed her lovely hand. "I esteem you more and more," said he.

"You ought, for it has been a hard struggle to me not to adore you, because you are so improved, *mon cousin*."

"Is it possible? In what respect?"

"You are browner and charitabler; and I should have been very kind to you—mawkishly kind, I fear, my sweet cousin, if this wretched money had not gone down in the *Tisbe*."

"Hallo!" cried the Viscount.

"Ah!" squeaked Lady Barbara, unused to such interjections.

"Gone down in what?" said Ipsden in a loud voice.

"Don't bellow in people's ears. The *Tisbe*, stupid," cried she, screaming at the top of her voice.

"Ri tum, ti tum, ti tum, tum, tum, tiddy, iddy," went Lord Ipsden,—he whistled a polka.

Lady Barbara (*inspecting him gravely*). "I have heard it at a distance, but I never saw how it was done before. *It is very, very pretty!!!!*"

Ipsden. "*Polkez-vous, Madame?*"

Lady Barb. "*Si, je polke, Monsieur le Vicomte.*"

They polkied for a second for two.

"Well, I dare say I am wrong," cried Lady Barbara, "but I like you better now you are a downright—ahem!—than when you were only an insipid non-intellectual—you are greatly improved."

Ips. "In what respects?"

Lady Barb. "Did I not tell you? browner and more impudent; but tell me," said she, resuming her sly satirical tone, "how is it that you, who used to be the pink of courtesy, dance and sing over the wreck of my fortunes?"

"Because they are not wrecked."

"I thought I told you my specie is gone down in the *Tisbe*."

Ipsden. "But the *Tisbe* has not gone down."

Lady Barb. "I tell you it is."

Ipsden. "I assure you it is not."

Lady Barb. "It is not?"

Ipsden. "Barbara! I am too happy, I begin to nourish such sweet hopes once more; oh! I could fall on my knees and bless you for something you said just now."

Lady Barbara blushed to the temples. "Then why don't you?" said she. "All you want is a little enthusiasm." Then recovering herself, she said, "You kneel on wet sand, with black trousers on; that will never be!!!"

These two were so occupied that they did not observe the approach of a stranger until he broke in upon their dialogue.

An Ancient Mariner had been for some minutes standing off and on, reconnoitring Lord Ipsden; he now bore down, and with great rough, roaring cordiality, that made Lady Barbara start, cried out, "Give me your hand, sir—give me your hand, if you were twice a Lord."

"I couldn't speak to you till the brig was safe in port, and you slipped away, but I've brought you up at last; and —give me your hand again, sir. I say, isn't it a pity you are a Lord instead of a sailor?"

Ipsden. "But I am a sailor."

Ancient Mariner. "That ye are, and as smart a one as ever tied a true-lover's knot in the top; but tell the truth,—you were never nearer losing the number of your mess than that day in the old *Tisbe*."

Lady Barb. "The old *Tisbe!* Oh!"

Ipsden. "Do you remember that nice little lurch she gave to leeward as we brought her round?"

Lady Barb. "O Richard!"

Ancient Mariner. "And that reel the old wench gave under our feet, north the pier-head. I wouldn't have given a washing-tub for her at that moment."

Ipsden. "Past danger becomes pleasure, sir. *Olim et hæc meminisse*—I beg your pardon, sir."

Ancient Mariner (taking off his hat, with feeling). "God bless

ye, sir, and send ye many happy days, and well spent, with the pretty lady I see alongside; asking your pardon, Miss, for parting pleasanter company,—so I'll sheer off."

And away went the skipper of the *Tisbe*, rolling fearfully. In the heat of this reminiscence, the skipper of the yacht (they are all alike, blue water once fairly tasted) had lost sight of Lady Barbara; he now looked round. Imagine his surprise! Her Ladyship was in tears.

"Dear Barbara," said Lord Ipsden, "do not distress yourself on my account."

"It is not your fe-feelings I care about; at least, I h-h-hope not; but I have been so unjust, and I prided myself so on my j-ju-justice."

"Never mind!"

"Oh! if you don't, I don't. I hate myself, so it is no wonder you h-hate me."

"I love you more than ever."

"Then you are a good soul! Of course you know I always *l*-esteemed you, Richard."

"No! I had an idea you despised me."

"How silly you are! Can't you see? When I thought you were not perfection, which you are now, it vexed me to death; you never saw me affront any one but you?"

"No, I never did! What does that prove?"

"That depends upon the wit of him that reasons thereon." (Coming to herself.)

"I love you, Barbara! Will you honour me with your hand?"

"No! I am not so base, so selfish: you are worth a hundred of me, and here have I been treating you *de haut en bas*. Dear Richard, poor Richard. Oh! oh! oh!" (A perfect flood of tears.)

"Barbara! I regret nothing; this moment pays for all."

"Well then, I will! since you keep pressing me. There, let me go; I must be alone; I must tell the sea how unjust I was, and how happy I am, and when you see me again, you shall see the better side of your cousin Barbara."

She was peremptory. "She had her folly and his merits to think over," she said; but she promised to pass through Newhaven, and he should put her into her pony-phaeton, which would meet her there. Lady Barbara was only a fool by the excess of her wit over her experience; and Lord Ipsden's love was not misplaced, for she had a great heart which she hid from little people. I forgive her! The resolutions she formed in company with the sea, having dis-

missed Ipsden, and ordered her flunky into the horizon, will probably give our Viscount just half-a-century of conjugal bliss.

As he was going, she stopped him and said, "Your friend had browner hands than I have hitherto conceived possible. *To tell the truth,* I took them for the claws of a mahogany table when he grappled you,—is that the term? *C'est égal*—I like him——"

She stopped him again. "Ipsden, in the midst of all this that poor man's ship is broken. I feel it is! You will buy him another, if you really love me,—for I like him."

And so these lovers parted for a time; and Lord Ipsden with a bounding heart returned to Newhaven. He went to entertain his late *vis-à-vis* at the "Peacock."

Meantime a shorter and less pleasant *rencontre* had taken place between Leith and that village. Gatty felt he should meet his lost sweetheart; and sure enough, at a turn of the road Christie and Jean came suddenly upon him. Jean nodded, but Christie took no notice of him; they passed him; he turned and followed them, and said, "Christie!"

"What is your will wi' me?" said she coldly.

"I—I—how pale you are!"

"I am no very weel."

"She has been watching over muckle wi' Flucker," said Jean. Christie thanked her with a look.

"I hope it is not—not——"

"Nae fears, lad," said she briskly; "I dinna think that muckle o' ye."

"And I think of nothing but you," said he.

A deep flush crimsoned the young woman's brow, but she restrained herself, and said icily, "Thaat's very gude o' ye, I'm sure."

Gatty felt all the contempt her manners and words expressed. He bit his lips: the tear started to his eye. "You will forget me," said he: "I do not deserve to be remembered, but I shall never forget you. I leave for England: I leave Newhaven for ever, where I have been so happy. I am going at three o'clock by the steamboat: won't you bid me good-bye?" he approached her timidly.

"Ay! that wull do," cried she; "Gude be wi' ye, lad; I wish ye nae ill." She gave a commanding gesture of dismissal; he turned away, and went sadly from her. She watched every motion when his back was turned.

"That is you, Christie," said Jean; "use the lads like dirt, an' they think a' the mair o' ye."

"O Jean! my hairt's broken. I'm just deeing for him."

"Let me speak till him then," said Jean; "I'll sune bring him till his marrow-banes;" and she took a hasty step to follow him.

Christie held her fast. "I'd dee ere I'd give in till them. O Jean! I'm a lassy clean flung awa; he has neither hairt nor spunk ava, yon lad!"

Jean began to make excuses for him: Christie inveighed against him: Jean spoke up for him with more earnestness.

Now observe, Jean despised the poor boy. Christie adored him. So Jean spoke for him, because women of every degree are often one solid mass of tact; and Christie abused him because she wanted to hear him defended.

CHAPTER XVI

RICHARD, Lord Viscount Ipsden, having dotted the sea-shore with sentinels, to tell him of Lady Barbara's approach, awaited his guest in the "Peacock;" but as Gatty was a little behind time, he placed Saunders sentinel over the "Peacock," and strolled eastward; as he came out of the "Peacock," Mrs. Gatty came down the little hill in front, and also proceeded eastward; meantime Lady Barbara and her escort were not far from the New Town of Newhaven, on their way from Leith.

Mrs. Gatty came down, merely with a vague fear. She had no reason to suppose her son's alliance with Christie either would or could be renewed, but she was a careful player, and would not give a chance away; she found he was gone out unusually early, so she came straight to the only place she dreaded; it was her son's last day in Scotland. She had packed his clothes, and he had inspired her with confidence by arranging pictures, &c., himself; she had no idea he was packing for his departure from this life, not Edinburgh only.

She came then to Newhaven with no serious misgivings, for even if her son had again vacillated, she saw that with Christie's pride and her own firmness, the game must be hers in the end; but as I said before, she was one who played her cards closely, and such seldom lose.

But my story is with the two young fishwives, who, on their return from Leith, found themselves at the foot of the New Town, Newhaven, some minutes before any of the other persons who, it is to be observed, were approaching it from different points; they came slowly in, Christie in particular, with a

listlessness she had never known till this last week; for some days her strength had failed her—it was Jean that carried the creel now—before, Christie, in the pride of her strength, would always do more than her share of their joint labour: then she could hardly be forced to eat, and what she did eat was quite tasteless to her, and sleep left her, and in its stead came uneasy slumbers, from which she awoke quivering from head to foot.

Oh! perilous venture of those who love one object with the whole heart. This great but tender heart was breaking day by day.

Well, Christie and Jean strolling slowly into the New Town of Newhaven, found an assemblage of the natives all looking seaward; the fishermen, except Sandy Liston, were away at the herring-fishery, but all the boys and women of the New Town were collected; the girls felt a momentary curiosity; it proved, however, to be only an individual swimming in towards shore from a greater distance than usual.

A little matter excites curiosity in such places. The man's head looked like a spot of ink. Sandy Liston was minding his own business lazily mending a skait-net, which he had attached to a crazy old herring-boat hauled up to rot.

Christie sat down, pale and languid, by him, on a creepie that a lass who had been baiting a line with mussels had just vacated; suddenly she seized Jean's arm with a convulsive motion; Jean looked up—it was the London steamboat running out from Leith to Granton Pier to take up her passengers for London. Charles Gatty was going by that boat; the look of mute despair the poor girl gave went to Jean's heart—she ran hastily from the group, and cried out of sight for poor Christie.

A fishwife looking through a telescope at the swimmer, remarked, "He's coming in fast; he's a gallant swimmer yon——"

"Can he dee't?" inquired Christie of Sandy Liston.

"Fine thaat," was the reply, "he does it aye o' Sundays when ye are at the kirk."

"It's no oot o' the kirk-window ye'll hae seen him, Sandy, my mon," said a young fishwife.

"Rin for my glass ony way, Flucker," said Christie, forcing herself to take some little interest.

Flucker brought it to her, she put her hand on his shoulder, got slowly up, and stood on the creepie, and adjusted the focus of her glass; after a short view she said to Flucker, "Rin and see the nock." She then levelled her glass again at the swimmer.

Flucker informed her the nock said "half eleven"—Scotch for "half-past ten."

Christie whipped out a well-thumbed almanack. "Yon nock's aye ahint," said she. She swept the sea once more with her glass, then brought it together with a click, and jumped off the stool: her quick intelligence viewed the matter differently from all the others.

"Noow," cried she smartly, "wha'll lend me his yawl?"

"Hets! dinna be sae interferin', lassie," said a fishwife.

"Hae nane o' ye ony spunk?" said Christie, taking no notice of the woman. "Speak, laddies!"

"M' uncle's yawl is at the pier-head; ye'll get her, my woman," said a boy.

"A schell'n for wha's first on board," said Christie, holding up the coin.

"Come awa, Flucker, we'll hae her schell'n," and these two worthies instantly effected a false start.

"It's no under your jackets," said Christie, as she dashed after them like the wind.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed Sandy.

"What's her business picking up a mon against his will?" said a woman.

"She's an awfu' lassie," whined another.

The examination of the swimmer was then continued, and the crowd increased; some would have it he was rapidly approaching, others that he made little or no way.

"Wha est?" said another.

"It's a lummy," said a girl.

"Na! it's no a lummy," said another.

Christie's boat was now seen standing out from the pier. Sandy Liston, casting a contemptuous look on all the rest, lifted himself lazily into the herring-boat and looked seaward. His manner changed in a moment.

"The deevil!" cried he; "the tide's turned! You wi' your glass, could you no see yon man's drifting oot to sea?"

"Hech!" cried the women, "he'll be drooned—he'll be drooned!"

"Yes; he'll be drooned!" cried Sandy, "if yon lassie does na come alongside him deevelich quick—he's sair spent, I doot."

Two spectators were now added to the scene, Mrs. Gatty and Lord Ipsden. Mrs. Gatty inquired what was the matter.

"It's a mon drooning," was the reply.

The poor fellow. whom Sandy, by aid of his glass, now dis-

covered to be in a worn-out condition, was about half a mile east of Newhaven pier-head, and unfortunately the wind was nearly due east. Christie was standing north-north-east, her boat-hook jammed against the sail, which stood as flat as a knife. The natives of the Old Town were now seen pouring down to the pier and the beach, and strangers were collecting like bees.

"After wit is everybody's wit!!!"—Old Proverb. The affair was in the Johnstone's hands.

"That boat is not going to the poor man," said Mrs. Gatty, "it is turning its back upon him."

"She canna lie in the wind's eye, for as clever as she is," answered a fishwife.

"I ken wha it is," suddenly squeaked a little fishwife; "it's Christie Johnstone's lad; it's yon daft painter fr' England. Hech!" cried she suddenly, observing Mrs. Gatty, "it's your son, woman."

The unfortunate woman gave a fearful scream, and flying like a tiger on Liston, commanded him "to go straight out to sea, and save her son."

Jean Carnie seized her arm, "Div ye see yon boat?" cried she; "and div ye mind Christie, the lass wha's hairt ye hae broken? a weel, woman,—*it's just a race betwеen deeth and Cirsty Johnstone for your son.*"

The poor old woman swooned dead away; they carried her into Christie Johnstone's house, and laid her down, then hurried back—the greater terror absorbed the less. Lady Barbara Sinclair was there from Leith, and seeing Lord Ipsden standing in the boat with a fisherman, she asked him to tell her what it was; neither he nor any one answered her.

"Why doesn't she come about, Liston?" cried Lord Ipsden, stamping with anxiety and impatience.

"She'll no be lang," said Sandy; "but they'll mak a mess o't wi' ne'er a man i' the boat."

"Ye're sure o' thaat?" put in a woman.

"Ay, about she comes," said Liston, as the sail came down on the first tack. He was mistaken; they dipped the lug as cleverly as any man in the town could.

"Hech! look at her hauling on the rope like a mon," cried a woman. The sail flew up on the other tack.

"She's an awfu' lassie," whined another.

"He's awa," groaned Liston, "he's doon!"

"No! he's up again," cried Lord Ipsden: "but I fear he can't live till the boat comes to him."

The fisherman and the Viscount held on by each other.

"He does na see her, or maybe he'd tak hairt."

"I'd give ten thousand pounds if only he could see her. My God, the man will be drowned under our eyes.—If he but saw her!!!"

The words had hardly left Lord Ipsden's lips, when the sound of a woman's voice came like an Æolian note across the water.

"Hurraih!" roared Liston, and every creature joined the cheer.

"She'll no let him dee. Ah! she's in the bows, hailing him an' waving the lad's bonnet ower her head to gie him coorage. Gude bless ye, lass; Gude bless ye!"

Christie knew it was no use hailing him against the wind, but the moment she got the wind she darted into the bows, and pitched in its highest key her full and brilliant voice; after a moment of suspense she received proof that she must be heard by him, for on the pier now hung men and women, clustered like bees, breathless with anxiety, and the moment after she hailed the drowning man, she saw and heard a wild yell of applause burst from the pier, and the pier was more distant than the man. She snatched Flucker's cap, planted her foot on the gunwale, held on by a rope, hailed the poor fellow again, and waved the cap round and round her head, to give him courage; and in a moment, at the sight of this, thousands of voices thundered back their cheers to her across the water. Blow, wind,—spring, boat,—and you, Christie, still ring life towards those despairing ears, and wave hope to those sinking eyes; cheer the boat on, you thousands that look upon this action! Hurrah! from the pier: Hurrah! from the town: Hurrah! from the shore: Hurrah! now, from the very ships in the roads; whose crews are swarming on the yards to look; five minutes ago they laughed at you; three thousand eyes and hearts hang upon you now; ay, these are the moments we live for! And now dead silence. The boat is within fifty-yards, they are all three consulting together round the mast: an error now is death; his forehead only seems above water.

"If they miss him on that tack?" said Lord Ipsden significantly to Liston.

"He'll never see London Brigg again," was the whispered reply.

They carried on till all on shore thought they would run over him, or past him; but no, at ten yards distant they were all at the sail, and had it down like lightning; and then Flucker sprang to the bows, the other boy to the helm.

Unfortunately, there were but two Johnstones in the boat; and this boy, in his hurry, actually put the helm to port, instead of to starboard. Christie, who stood amidships, saw the error; she sprang aft, flung the boy from the helm, and jammed it hard-a-starboard with her foot. The boat answered the helm, but too late for Flucker; the man was four yards from him as the boat drifted by.

"He's a deed mon!" cried Liston, on shore.

The boat's length gave one more little chance; the after-part must drift nearer him—thanks to Christie. Flucker flew aft; flung himself on his back, and seized his sister's petticoats.

"Fling yourself ower the gunwale," screamed he. "Ye'll no hurt; I'se haud ye."

She flung herself boldly over the gunwale; the man was sinking, her nails touched his hair, her fingers entangled themselves in it, she gave him a powerful wrench and brought him alongside, the boys pinned him like wild cats.

Christie darted away forward to the mast, passed a rope round it, threw it to the boys, in a moment it was under his shoulders. Christie hauled on it from the fore thwart, the boys lifted him, and they tumbled him, gasping and gurgling like a dying salmon, into the bottom of the boat, and flung net, and jackets, and sail over him, to keep the life in him.

Ah! draw your breath, all hands at sea, and ashore, and don't try it again, young gentleman, for there was nothing to spare: when you were missed at the bow two stout hearts quivered for you; Lord Ipsden hid his face in his two hands, Sandy Liston gave a groan, and when you were grabbed astern, jumped out of his boat, and cried—

"A jill o' whisky, for ony favour, for it's turned me as seeck as a doeg." He added, "He may bless yon lassie's fowr banes, for she's taen him oot o' death's maw, as sure as Gude's in heaven!"

Lady Barbara, who had all her life been longing to see perilous adventures, prayed, and trembled, and cried most piteously; and Lord Ipsden's back was to her, and he paid no attention to her voice; but when the battle was won and Lord Ipsden turned and saw her, she clung to his arm and dried her tears; and then the Old Town cheered the boat, and the New Town cheered the boat, and the towns cheered each other; and the Johnstones, lad and lass, set their sail, and swept back in triumph to the pier; so then Lady Barbara's blood mounted and tingled in her veins like fire. "Oh, how noble!" cried she.

"Yes, dearest," said Ipsden. "You have seen something great done at last; and by a woman, too!"

"Yes," said Barbara, "how beautiful! oh! how beautiful it all is; only the next one I see I should like the danger to be over first, that is all."

The boys and Christie, the moment they had saved Gatty, up sail again for Newhaven; they landed in about three minutes at the pier.

TIME.	min.	sec.
From Newhaven town to pier on foot . .	1	30
First tack	5	30
Second tack, and getting him on board . .	4	00
Back to the pier, going free	3	30
Total . .	14	30

They came in to the pier, Christie sitting quietly on the thwart after her work, the boy steering, and Flucker standing against the mast, hands in his pockets; the deportment this young gentleman thought fit to assume on this occasion was "complete apathy;" he came into port with the air of one bringing home the ordinary results of his day's fishing; this was, I suppose, to impress the spectators with the notion that saving lives was an every-day affair with La Famille Johnstone; as for Gatty, he came to himself under his heap of nets and jackets, and spoke once between Death's jaw and the pier.

"Beautiful!" murmured he, and was silent. The meaning of this observation never transpired, and never will in this world. Six months afterwards, being subjected to a searching interrogatory, he stated that he had alluded to the majesty and freedom of a certain *pose* Christie had adopted whilst hailing him from the boat; but, reader, if he had wanted you and me to believe it was this, he should not have been half a year finding it out—*incredulí odimus!* They landed, and Christie sprang on shore; whilst she was wending her way through the crowd, impeded by greetings and acclamations, with every now and then a lass waving her kerchief or a lad his bonnet over the heroine's head, poor Mrs. Gatty was receiving the attention of the New Town; they brought her to, they told her the good news—she thanked God. The whole story had spread like wildfire; they expostulated with her, they told her, now was the time to show she had a heart, and bless the young people.

She rewarded them with a valuable precept.

"Mind your own business!" said she.

"Hech! y' are a dour wife!" cried Newhaven.

The dour wife bent her eyes on the ground.

The people were still collected at the foot of the street, but they were now in knots, when in dashed Flucker, arriving by a short cut, and crying, "She does na ken, she does na ken, she was ower moedest to look, I daur say, and ye'll no tell her, for he's a blackguard, an' he's just making a fule o' the puir lass, and if she kens what she has done for him, she'll be fonder o' him than a coow o' her cauf."

"O Flucker! we maun tell her, it's her lad, her ain lad, she saved," expostulated a woman.

"Did ever my feyther do a good turn till ye?" cried Flucker. "Aweel then, ye'll no tell the lassie, she's weel as she is; he's gaun t' Enngland the day. I cannie gie yie a' a hidin'," said he, with an eye that flashed volumes of good intention, on a hundred and fifty people; "but I am feytherless and motherless, an' I can fa' on my knees an' curse ye a' if ye do us sic an ill turn, an' then ye'll see whether ye'll thrive."

"We'll no tell, Flucker, ye need na currse us ony way."

His Lordship, with all the sharp authority of a skipper, ordered Master Flucker to the pier, with a message to the yacht; Flucker *quâ* yachtsman was a machine, and went as a matter of course. I am determined to tell her," said Lord Ipsden to Lady Barbara.

"But," remonstrated Lady Barbara, "the poor boy says he will curse us if we do."

"He won't curse me."

"How do you know that?"

"Because the little blackguard's grog would be stopped on board the yacht if he did."

Flucker had not been gone many minutes before loud cheering was heard, and Christie Johnstone appeared convoyed by a large detachment of the Old Town; she had tried to slip away, but they would not let her. They convoyed her in triumph till they saw the New Town people, and then they turned and left her. She came in amongst the groups, a changed woman—her pallor and her listlessness were gone—the old light was in her eye, and the bright colour in her cheek, and she seemed hardly to touch the earth. "I'm just droukit, lasses," cried she gaily, wringing her sleeve. Every eye was upon her; did she know, or did she not know, what she had done?

Lord Ipsden stepped forward; the people tacitly accepted him as the vehicle of their curiosity.

"Who was it, Christie?"

"I dinna ken, for my pairt!"

Mrs. Gatty came out of the house.

"A handsome young fellow, I hope, Christie?" resumed Lord Ipsden.

"Ye maun ask Flucker," was the reply. "I could na tak muckle notice, ye ken," putting her hand before her eye, and half smiling.

"Well! I hear he is very good-looking; and I hear you think so, too."

She glided to him, and looked in his face. He gave a meaning smile. The poor girl looked quite perplexed. Suddenly she gave a violent start.

"Christie! where is Christie?" had cried a well-known voice. He had learned on the pier who had saved him—he had slipped up among the boats to find her—he could not find his hat—he could not wait for it—his dripping hair showed where he had been—it was her love, whom she had just saved out of death's very jaws. She gave a cry of love, that went through every heart, high or low, young or old, that heard it. And she went to him, through the air it seemed; but quick as she was, another was as quick; the mother had seen him first, and she was there. Christie saw nothing. With another cry, the very key-note of her great and loving heart, she flung her arms round——Mrs. Gatty, who was on the same errand as herself.

"Hearts are not steel, and steel is bent;
Hearts are not flint, and flint is rent."

The old woman felt Christie touch her. She turned from her son in a moment, and wept upon her neck. Her lover took her hand and kissed it, and pressed it to his bosom, and tried to speak to her; but all he could do, was to sob and choke—and kiss her hand again.

"My daughter!" sobbed the old woman.

At that word Christie clasped her quickly; and then Christie began to cry.

"I am not a stone," cried Mrs. Gatty. "I gave him life; but you have saved him from death. O Charles! never make her repent what she has done for you."

She was a woman after all; and prudence and prejudice melted like snow before her heart. There were not many dry eyes—least of all, the heroic Lady Barbara's. The three, whom a moment had made one, were becoming calmer, and taking one another's hands for life, when a diabolical sound arose—

and what was it but Sandy Liston, who, after furious resistance, was blubbering with explosive but short-lived violence. Having done it, he was the first to draw everybody's attention to the phenomenon; and affecting to consider it a purely physical attack, like a *coup de soleil*, or so on, he proceeded instantly to Drysale's for his panacea.

Lady Barbara enjoined Lord Ipsden to watch these people, and not to lose a word they said; and after she had insisted upon kissing Christie, she went off to her carriage. And she, too, was so happy, she cried three distinct times on her way to Edinburgh.

Lord Ipsden having reminded Gatty of his engagement, begged him to add his mother and Christie to the party, and escorted Lady Barbara to her phaeton. So then the people dispersed by degrees.

"That old lady's face seems familiar to me," said Lord Ipsden, as he stood on the little natural platform by the "Peacock." "Do you know who she is, Saunders?"

"It is Peggy, that was cook in your Lordship's uncle's time, my Lord. She married a greengrocer," added Saunders, with an injured air.

"Hech! hech!" cried Flucker, "Christie has ta'en up her head wi' a cook's son."

Mrs. Gatty was ushered into the "Peacock," with mock civility, by Mr. Saunders. No recognition took place, each being ashamed of the other as an acquaintance. The next arrival was a beautiful young lady, in a black silk gown, a plain but duck-like plaid shawl, who proved to be Christie Johnstone, in her Sunday attire. When they met, Mrs. Gatty gave a little scream of joy, and said, "O my child! if I had seen you in that dress, I should never have said a word against you."

"Pars minima est ipsa puella sui!"

His Lordship stepped up to her, took off his hat, and said, "Will Mrs. Gatty take from me a commission for two pictures, as big as herself, and as bonny?" added he, doing a little Scotch. He handed her a cheque; and turning to Gatty, added, "At your convenience, sir, *bien entendu*."

"Hech! it's for five hundred pund, Chairles."

"Good gear gangs in little book,"[1] said Jean.

"Ay, does it," replied Flucker, assuming the compliment.

"My Lord!" said the artist, "you treat art like a prince;

[1] Bulk.

and she shall treat you like a queen. When the sun comes out again, I will work for you and fame. You shall have two things painted, every stroke loyally in the sunlight. In spite of gloomy winter and gloomier London, I will try if I can't hang nature and summer on your walls for ever. As for me, you know I must go to Gerard Dow and Cuyp, and Pierre de Hoogh, when my little sand is run; but my handwriting shall warm your children's children's hearts, sir, when this hand is dust." His eye turned inwards, he walked to and fro, and his companions died out of his sight—he was in the kingdom of art.

His Lordship and Jean entered the "Peacock," followed by Flucker, who merely lingered at the door to moralise as follows:—

"Hech! hech! isna thaat lamēntable? Christie's mon's as daft as a drunk weaver."

But one stayed quietly behind, and assumed that moment the office of her life.

"Ay!" he burst out again, "*the resources of our art are still unfathomed! Pictures are yet to be painted that shall refresh men's inner souls, and help their hearts against the artificial world; and charm the fiend away, like David's harp!! The world, after centuries of lies, will give nature and truth a trial. What a paradise art will be, when truths, instead of lies, shall be told on paper, on marble, on canvas, and on the boards!!!*"

"Dinner's on the boarrd," murmured Christie, alluding to Lord Ipsden's breakfast; "and I hae the charge o' ye," pulling his sleeve, hard enough to destroy the equilibrium of a flea.

"Then don't let us waste our time here. O Christie!"

"What est, my laddy?"

"I'm so preciously hungry!!!!"

"C-way[1] then!"

Off they ran, hand in hand, sparks of beauty, love, and happiness flying all about them.

CHAPTER XVII

"THERE is nothing but meeting and parting in this world!" and you may be sure the incongruous personages of our tale could not long be together. Their separate paths had met for an instant, in one focus, furnished then and there the matter of an eccentric story, and then diverged for ever.

[1] Come away.

Our lives have a general current, and also an episode or two; and the episodes of a commonplace life are often rather startling; in like manner, this tale is not a specimen, but an episode of Lord Ipsden and Lady Barbara, who soon after this married and lived like the rest of the *beau monde*. In so doing, they passed out of my hands; such as wish to know how Viscounts and Viscountesses feed, and sleep, and do the domestic (so called), and the social (so called), are referred to the fashionable novel. To Mr. Saunders, for instance, who has in the press one of those cerberus-leviathans of fiction, so common now; incredible as folio to future ages. Saunders will take you by the hand, and lead you over carpets two inches thick—under rosy curtains—to dinner-tables. He will *fête* you, and opera you, and dazzle your young imagination with epergnes, and salvers, and buhl, and ormolu. No fish-wives or painters shall intrude upon his polished scenes; all shall be as genteel as himself. Saunders is a good authority; he is more in the society, and far more in the confidence of the great, than most fashionable novelists. Mr. Saunders's work will be in three volumes; nine hundred and ninety pages!!!!!!

In other words, this single work, of this ingenious writer, will equal in bulk the aggregate of all the writings extant by Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and St. Paul!!!

I shall not venture into competition with this behemoth of the salon; I will evaporate in thin generalities. Lord Ipsden then lived very happily with Lady Barbara, whose hero he straightway became, and who nobly and poetically dotes upon him. He has gone into political life to please her, and will remain there—to please himself. They were both very grateful to Newhaven; when they married, they vowed to visit it twice a year, and mingle a fortnight's simple life with its simple scenes; but four years have passed, and they have never been there again, and I dare say never will; but when Viscount Ipsden falls in with a brother aristocrat, who is crushed by the fiend *ennui*, he remembers Aberford, and condenses his famous recipe into a two-edged hexameter, which will make my learned reader laugh, for it is full of wisdom:—

"Diluculo surgas! miseris succurrere discas!!"

Flucker Johnstone meditated during breakfast upon the five hundred pounds, and regretted he had not, years ago, adopted Mr. Gatty's profession; some days afterwards he invited his sister to a conference. Chairs being set, Mr. Flucker laid down this observation—that near relations should be deuced care-

ful not to cast discredit upon one another; that now his sister was to be a lady, it was repugnant to his sense of right to be a fisherman and make her ladyship blush for him; on the contrary, he felt it his duty to rise to such high consideration that she should be proud of him. Christie acquiesced at once in this position, but professed herself embarrassed to know how such a "ne'er-do-weel" was to be made a source of pride; then she kissed Flucker, and said, in a tone somewhat inconsistent with the above, "Tell me, my laamb!"

Her lamb informed her, that the sea has many paths; some of them disgraceful, such as line or net fishing, and the periodical laying down, on rocky shoals, and taking up again, of lobster-creels; others, superior to anything the dry land can offer in importance and dignity and general estimation, such as the command of a merchant-vessel trading to the East or West Indies. Her lamb then suggested that if she would be so good as to launch him in the merchant-service, with a good rig of clothes and money in his pocket, there was that in his head which would enable him to work to windward of most of his contemporaries. He bade her calculate upon the following results: in a year or two he would be second mate—and next year, first mate—and, in a few years more, skipper! Think of that, lass! Skipper of a vessel, whose rig he generously left his sister free to determine; premising that two masts were, in his theory of navigation, indispensable, and that three were a great deal more like Cocker than two. This led to a general consultation; Flucker's ambition was discussed and praised. That modest young gentleman, in spite of many injunctions to the contrary, communicated his sister's plans for him to Lord Ipsden, and affected to doubt their prudence. The bait took; Lord Ipsden wrote to his man of business, and an unexpected blow fell upon the ingenious Flucker. He was sent to school; there to learn a little astronomy, a little navigation, a little seamanship, a little manners, &c.; in the mysteries of reading and writing his sister had already perfected him by dint of "the taws." This school was a blow; but Flucker was no fool: he saw there was no way of getting from school to sea without working. So he literally worked out to sea. His first voyage was distinguished by the following peculiarities: attempts to put tricks upon this particular novice generally ended in the laugh turning against the experimenters; and instead of drinking his grog, which he hates, he secreted it, and sold it for various advantages. He has been now four voyages; when he comes ashore, instead of

going to haunts of folly and vice, he instantly bears up for his sister's house—Kensington Gravel-pits—which he makes in the following manner: he goes up the river—Heaven knows where all—this he calls running down the longitude; then he lands, and bears down upon the Gravel-pits: in particular knowledge of the names of streets he is deficient, but he knows the exact bearings of Christie's dwelling. He tacks and wears according as masonry compels him, and he arrives at the gate. He hails the house, in a voice that brings all the inhabitants of the row to their windows, including Christie; he is fallen upon and dragged into the house. The first thing is, he draws out from his boots, and his back, and other hiding-places, china crape and marvellous silk handkerchiefs for Christie; and she takes from his pocket a mass of Oriental sugar-plums, with which, but for this precaution, she knows by experience he would poison young Charley; and soon he is to be seen, sitting with his hand in his sister's, and she looking like a mother upon his handsome weather-beaten face, and Gatty opposite, adoring him as a specimen of male beauty, and sometimes making furtive sketches of him. And then the tales he always brings with him; the house is never very dull, but it is livelier than ever when this inexhaustible sailor casts anchor in it.

The friends (chiefly artists) who used to leave at 9.30, stay till eleven: for an intelligent sailor is better company than two lawyers, two bishops, three soldiers, and four writers of plays and tales, all rolled together. And still he tells Christie he shall command a vessel some day, and leads her to the most cheering inferences from the fact of his prudence and his general width-awake; in particular he bids her contrast with him the general fate of sailors, eaten up by landsharks, particularly of the female gender, whom he demonstrates to be the worst enemies poor Jack has; he calls these sunken rocks, fire-ships, and other metaphors. He concludes thus: "You are all the lass I mean to have, till I'm a skipper, and then I'll bear up alongside some pretty decent lass, like yourself, Christie, and we'll sail in company all our lives, let the wind blow high or low." Such is the gracious Flucker become in his twentieth year. Last voyage, with Christie's aid, he produced a sextant of his own, and "made it twelve o'clock" (with the sun's consent, I hope), and the eyes of authority fell upon him. So who knows, perhaps he may one day sail a ship; and if he does, he will be prouder and happier than if we made him monarch of the globe.

To return to our chiefs; Mrs. Gatty gave her formal consent to her son's marriage with Christie Johnstone. There were examples. Aristocracy had ere now condescended to wealth; earls had married women rich by tallow-importing papas; and no doubt had these same earls been consulted in Gatty's case, they would have decided that Christie Johnstone, with her real and funded property, was not a villainous match for a greengrocer's son, without a rapp;[1] but Mrs. Gatty did not reason so,—did not reason at all; luckily, her heart ran away with her judgment, and her judgment ceasing to act, she became a wise woman.

The case was peculiar. Gatty was an artist *pur sang*,—and Christie, who would not have been the wife for a *petit maître*, was the wife of wives for him. He wanted a beautiful wife to embellish his canvas, disfigured htiherto by an injudicious selection of models; a virtuous wife, to be his crown; a prudent wife, to save him from ruin; a cheerful wife, to sustain his spirits, drooping at times by virtue of his artist's temperament; an intellectual wife, to preserve his children from being born dolts, and bred dunces, and to keep his own mind from sharpening to one point, and so contracting and becoming monomaniacal: and he found all these qualities, together with the sun and moon of human existence—true love and true religion—in Christie Johnstone.

In similar cases, foolish men have set to work to make, in six months, their diamond of nature, the exact cut and gloss of other men's pastes, and nervously watching the process, have suffered torture; luckily Charles Gatty was not wise enough for this; he saw nature had distinguished her he loved beyond her fellows; here, as elsewhere, he had faith in nature,—he believed that Christie would charm everybody of eye, and ear, and mind, and heart, that approached her; he admired her as she was, and left her to polish herself, if she chose. He did well; she came to London with a fine mind, a broad brogue, a delicate ear; she observed how her husband's friends spoke, and in a very few months she had toned down her Scotch to a rich Ionic colouring, which her womanly instinct will never let her exchange for the thin, vinegar accents that are too prevalent in English and French society; and in other respects she caught, by easy gradation, the tone of the new society to which her marriage introduced her, without, however, losing her charming self. The wise dowager

[1] A diminutive German coin.

lodges hard by, having resisted an invitation to be in the same house; she comes to that house to assist the young wife with her experience, and to be welcome,—not to interfere every minute, and tease her; she loves her daughter-in-law almost as much as she does her son, and she is happy because he bids fair to be an immortal painter, and, above all, a gentleman; and she a wifely wife, a motherly mother, and, above all, a lady.

This, then, is a happy couple. Their life is full of purpose and industry, yet lightened by gaiety; they go to operas, theatres, and balls, for they are young. They have plenty of society, real society, not the ill-assorted collection of a predetermined number of bodies, that blindly assumes that name, but the rich communication of various and fertile minds; they very, very seldom consent to squat four mortal hours on one chair (like old hares stiffening in their hot forms), and nibbling, sipping, and twaddling, in four mortal hours, what could have been eaten, drunken, and said, in thirty-five minutes. They are both artists at heart, and it shocks their natures to see folks mix so very largely the *inutile* with the *insipidum*, and waste at one huge but barren incubation, the soul, and the stomach, and the irrevocable hours, things with which so much is to be done. But they have many desirable acquaintances, and not a few friends; the latter are mostly lovers of truth in their several departments, and in all things: among them are painters, sculptors, engineers, writers, conversers, thinkers; these acknowledging, even in England, other gods besides the intestines, meet often *chez* Gatty, chiefly for mental intercourse; a cup of tea with such is found, by experience, to be better than a stalled elk where chit-chat reigns over the prostrate hours.

This, then, is a happy couple; the very pigeons and the crows need not blush for the nest at Kensington Gravel-pits. There the divine institution Marriage takes its natural colours, and it is at once pleasant and good to catch such glimpses of Heaven's design, and sad to think how often this great boon, accorded by God to man and woman, must have been abused and perverted, ere it could have sunk to be the standing butt of farce-writers, and the theme of weekly punsters.

In this pair we see the wonders a male and female can do for each other in the sweet bond of holy wedlook. In that blessed relation alone two interests are really one, and two hearts lie safe at anchor side by side. Christie and Charles are friends,—for they are man and wife. Christie and Charles

are lovers still,—for they are man and wife. Christie and Charles are one for ever,—for they are man and wife.

This wife brightens the house from kitchen to garret, for her husband; this husband works like a king for his wife's comfort, and for his own fame,—and that fame is his wife's glory. When one of these expresses or hints a wish, the other's first impulse is to find the means, not the objections. They share all troubles, and by sharing, halve them. They share all pleasures, and by sharing double them. They climb the hill together now, and many a canty day they shall have with one another; and when, by the inevitable law, they begin to descend towards the dark valley, they will still go hand in hand, smiling so tenderly, and supporting each other with a care more lovely than when the arm was strong and the foot firm.

On these two temperate lives old age will descend lightly, gradually, gently, and late,—and late upon these evergreen hearts, because they are not tuned to some selfish, isolated key; these hearts beat and ring with the young hearts of their dear children, and years hence papa and mamma will begin life hopefully, wishfully, warmly again with each loved novice in turn. And when old age does come, it will be no calamity to these, as it is to you, poor battered beau, laughed at by the fair ninnies who erst laughed with you; to you, poor follower of salmon, fox, and pheasant, whose joints are stiffening, whose nerve is gone,—whose Golgotha remains; to you, poor faded beauty, who have staked all upon man's appetite, and not accumulated goodness or sense for your second course; to you, poor drawing-room wit, whose scarcasm has turned to venom, and is turning to drivel.

What terrors has old age for this happy pair? it cannot make them ugly, for though the purple light of youth recedes, a new kind of tranquil beauty, the aloe-blossom of many years of innocence, comes to, and sits like a dove upon the aged faces, where goodness, sympathy, and intelligence have harboured together so long; and where evil passions have flitted (for we are all human), but found no resting-place. Old age is no calamity to them: it cannot terrify them; for ere they had been married a week the woman taught the man, lover of truth, to search for the highest and greatest truths, in a book written for men's souls, by the Author of the world, the sea, the stars, the sun, the soul; and this book, *Dei gratiâ*, will, as the good bishop sings—

> "Teach them to live, that they may dread
> The grave as little as their bed."

It cannot make them sad, for ere it comes, loved souls will have gone from earth, and from their tender bosom, but not from their memories; and will seem to beckon them now across the cold valley to the golden land. It cannot make them sad, for on earth the happiest must drink a sorrowful cup more than once in a long life, and so their brightest hopes will have come to dwell habitually on things beyond the grave; and the great painter, jam Senex, will chiefly meditate upon a richer landscape and brighter figures than human hand has ever painted; a scene whose glories he can see from hence but by glimpses, and through a glass darkly; the great meadows on the other side of Jordan, which are bright with the spirits of the just that walk there, and are warmed with an eternal sun, and ring with the triumph of the humble and the true, and the praises of God for ever.

NOTE.

This story was written three years ago, and one or two topics in it are not treated exactly as they would be if written by the same hand to-day. But if the Author had retouched those pages with his colours of 1853, he would (he thinks) have destroyed the only merit they have, viz., that of containing genuine contemporaneous verdicts upon a cant that was flourishing like a peony, and a truth that was struggling for bare life, in the year of truth 1850.

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